EXPOSITORY PREACHING
PLANS AND METHODS

REV. F. B. MEYER, B. A.

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By
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Introductory Note

A FAMOUS teacher of Homiletics in an American school used to tell his students a generation ago that the one kind of preaching which always wore was the Expository. The experience of his students, now honored and wise leaders of their own generations, has many times confirmed this. It is not pulpit eloquence no matter how brilliant, nor topical preaching no matter how timely, wise, varied, or epigrammatic, which best resists the wear and tear of time in a long pastorate with its steady and unceasing demand for sermons, week in, week out, which feed and nourish and inspire the flock.

No other style of preaching can so completely guarantee immunity from an indulgence in special crochets and fads. The Bible is an exceedingly broad book in its treatment of life and, he who successfully preaches through, even one small section of it, will find a variety of subjects and principles and lessons—so great a variety that if he is fair with all he will be saved from the

error of over-emphasis and of neglecting certain broad tracts of truth.

The strain of preaching which some complain of is due, perhaps, in no small measure to the fact that it is so seldom expository, and the effort of finding a topic is added to the labor of preparation. And this may be one reason for the short pastorates, which disease is surely making inroads on the health of the Church.

But many men cannot, or think they cannot, preach expository sermons. Exposition is an unknown art to them. The aim of this book is not only to demonstrate the value of expository preaching, but to show how.

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A PLEA FOR THE EXPOSITORY METHOD

CHAPTER ONE

Expository Preaching, Plans and Methods

I

A PLEA FOR THE EXPOSITORY METHOD IN PREACHING

THE one supreme object of the Christian ministry is to preach Christ, and Him crucified. The noble roads, by which the Romans bound the Iron Empire together, traveled from the ends of Europe to converge on the golden milestone in the City of the Seven Hills, and all sermons must culminate and find their loftiest purpose in the Divine Redeemer. We must never forget that, as its ministers, we have been allowed of God to be trusted with the gospel, and to us has been committed the ministry of Reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. In the letter which the late Principal Rainy wrote to the Madras College students he said: "We possess nothing so precious, we value nothing so much; we have no source of good so full, fruitful, and enduring; we have nothing to compare with the Lord Jesus Christ. To Him we bear witness." "Whom we proclaim," cried the apostle, "admonishing every man, teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man

perfect in Christ." Brethren, let us strive and labour towards the same end! Let our Lord Jesus be the one abiding reality with us, in our innermost thought, our private devotions, our ministry, and our preaching! Let Him be first, and last, and midst, and all-in-all! Let us wake with Him in the morning, walk with Him all day, and lie down to sleep in the quiet sense of His presence! To present Him to men, by life and ministry and written or spoken speech, must be the thread on which are strung all the incidents of our varied experiences!

Our ministry also must be cruciform. The thought that our Master was crucified must never be far from our thoughts. Not primarily as teacher, prophet, wonder-worker, or social reformer, but as having been slain from before the foundations of the everlasting hills! "Christ, and Him crucified," the apostle said.

All the great churches of Europe are cruciform, and all our living and preaching must bear witness, first of all, to that which we also have received, "how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."

In this connection we may again and again return to the memorable experience of Dr. Chalmers. If any man could have succeeded by the presentation of the high morality and noble example of Christ in winning the hearts of men, it was he; who was so magnetic in his personality, a torrent of fire in eloquence, and great in every quality of

manhood? But what things were gain to him, these he counted loss, when, after reading Wilberforce's "Practical View," he began to believe in and preach the great doctrines that center in the Cross. "I am not sensible," he says, "that all the vehemence with which I urged the virtues and the proprieties of social life had the weight of a feather on the hearts of my parishioners. And it was not till I got impressed of the utter alienation of the heart, in all its desires and affections, from God; and it was not till reconciliation to Him became the distinct and the prominent object of my ministerial exertions; it was not till I took the Scriptural way of laying the method of reconciliation before them; it was not till the free offer of forgiveness through the blood of Christ was urged upon their acceptance, and the Holy Spirit given through Christ's mediatorship to all who ask for Him was set before them as the unceasing object of their dependence and their prayers, that even those minor reformations began to appear." This, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter. There is no way of preaching morality so effective as to set forth the kind of character which springs from the love of the redeemed to the Redeemer. What we need is the old, old story preached by new, new men! Ethics by all means; but the fair temple must have its foundations set deep in the death which destroyed Him that had the power of death, and delivered them who throughout their lives had been subject to bondage.

One other point must be borne in mind: Our ministry is a partnership. We are called into the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, who is the gift of the risen Christ, with whom our Master still co-operates with His servants. "So when the Lord Jesus had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word."

There are days in men's lives that come unheralded and unannounced, when the full significance of this majestic co-partnership first breaks on their view. No angel-faces look down from heaven, no angel-voices put us on the alert. But as they look back they realize that these were the turning-points, the watershed of their history. It was thus with Moses. The sun rose as usual; the sheep browsed on the scant herbage or lay panting in the shadows of a great rock; the giant forms of red-sandstone mountains bared themselves to the glare of the scorching heat; when suddenly right before him the Bush began to burn with a glow above the brightness of the sun, and a voice from out of its heart said:

"Certainly I will be with thee."

Immediately he was transformed. He was no longer even an agent or instrument, but a companion and ally. He had simply to walk with God and do His will. He need no longer to be a servant, because henceforth he was permitted

as a friend to know the things that his Lord was doing.

Passing to the extreme distance of time given that august theophany, and with the object of bringing such an experience within the reach of ourselves, whose dwarfed and stunted lives can hardly be compared with that of the great Lawgiver, let us recall that memorable experience of Hudson Taylor, the honoured founder of the China Inland Mission. Whilst that mighty agency was but a seed, as he walked one Sunday morning on the Brighton sea-sands it seemed as though the Almighty said to him:

"Hudson Taylor, I am going to evangelize Inland China, and if you will walk with Me, I will do it through you."

Was it possible, after that, that any burden should seem heavy? God was with him, working out His own purposes, and making his poor barley loaves and small fish enough and to spare.

Similarly, in preaching, there are two, not one, in every pulpit where the true ideal is realized. As in a saw-pit, the workman on the surface is in collusion with his companion in the depth, and the two, with perfect rhythm, coöperate, lifting and depressing the same saw; so the minister, on whom all eyes are fixed, coöperates with One whom none can see, but who is certainly present.

"It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us!"

"I heard a voice saying . . ."—and this is the voice of the preacher. "Amen, saith the

Spirit . . . ''—this is the affirmative and co-witness of the Paraclete. Church members must walk, and ministers must preach, in the paracletism of the Paraclete.

Our mission to the world is only possible of fulfillment in so far as it represents the union of the human and Divine; of our flesh and blood with Him, who still needs our humanity, as He issues forth to achieve the great purposes of redemption. To realise this copartnership makes us strong and confident, even when confronted by tasks, compared with which the supreme tasks of modern engineering are child's play.

Each month seems to witness some fresh achievement of human skill, which our fathers would have ridiculed as beyond the realms of reason. And why! Because we are learning to entrap and bridle the Titanic forces of nature. Our ancestors were content to ride a-pillion, or jog through the country in a coach or caravan, or allow the winds to dictate the speed of their sailing vessels. But with us, the roads are devoured by the automobile; the aviator has chartered the fields of air, and steers his aerial ship as he will, independently of currents; the electric train plunges through the subterranean tunnels of our cities, and we can read in Chicago or London messages borne by wireless telegraphy of events happening in mid-Atlantic. Nothing seems too great to attempt or too hard to conquer. The reason for all this lies, of course, in the fact that

man has, by patient observation, mastered the laws and conditions on which the great natural forces operate with undeviating precision; and having learnt them, has so suited his machinery that they must work through it to help him.

These laws are, of course, only the statement of the way in which the power acts, but are not the power. In the ultimate analysis the power would be found to be the working of that mighty Being, who is over all, and through all, and in all. But the same power of the same God is at the disposal of every faithful minister of Christ's gospel who will set himself to discover the laws and conditions on which it works.

What ordinary men accomplish by allegiance with natural forces, through their intelligence, patience, and exact obedience, religious men can accomplish through their alliance with spiritual forces, through their obedience, patience and faith. The natural and spiritual are one. "Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual." The physical and spiritual are different manifestations of the Divine energy, working appropriately on different levels.

As the same power which thunders with deafening roar over Niagara shines with quiet glory in the streets of Buffalo, so the Divine power that throbs in the lower ranges in the steam-engine or electric flash can, in its higher ranges, move a continent to repentance and change three thousand

persons from unbelief to faith in the course of a single address.

Now, it will be readily granted that the scientific man, intent on unravelling the secrets of nature and of the utilization of her resources, must study her processes with the utmost accuracy and care, and must obey them in the smallest particular.

Your machinery may be intricate and costly, ingenious and artistic; but if, in one small detail, you have failed to conform to the inexorable requirements of nature, it will refuse to act, and the cunning powers that you wish to catch and use will evade you. The machinery which was to utilize the power of Niagara seemed well-nigh perfect, but it wouldn't move an inch, though coaxed and almost prayed to condescend to undertake its Herculean task. Finally a great scientist, summoned to the spot at considerable cost, after a ten-minute survey pointed out one trivial omission. When that was adjusted and righted the whole machinery took up its assigned work and has carried its burden ever since.

The same principle prevails for all who will coöperate with the Spirit of God. Men can command Him concerning the work of His hands, if only they obey Him. If you would receive the coöperation of a Force, you must obey the Law of that force's operation. But remember, it will not abate one jot or tittle of its exacting demands. Heaven and earth may pass away, but no least

detail can be surrendered to our ignorance or indolence. Our great Partner is particular to the minutest particulars. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Wherefore we cannot afford to be disobedient to the heavenly vision.

There are, therefore, certain conditions which must be fulfilled, if a minister is to enjoy the helpful partnership of the Spirit. The apostle speaks of "the law of the Spirit of life." He acts on precise, regular and ascertainable principles. There is no variableness, nor shadow of turning in the putting forth of His energy. Certainly our Lord compares Him to the wind. But even the wind obeys an unalterable law. What can be more definite and regular than the steady current of the trade-winds, which sailors have trusted from the earliest days, when in their tiny craft they ventured to cross the deep! The weather forecast in the daily press, prognosticating the prevailing winds, attests the same fact.

The apostles received what seemed to be a perfect gale of Pentecostal power because they absolutely and completely submitted to the Divine demands. So will it be in the church of to-day.

But what are those conditions? They appear to be these:

1. We must be spiritual men. The natural man—*i. e.*, the man dominated by an excessive egotism, whether revealing itself in sensual passion or in vanity, self-seeking and pride—cannot

expect to be a sharer in spiritual power. The centurion could only issue commands with the certainty of being obeyed because he was himself "a man under authority." The apostles always insisted that the Holy Spirit was given only to those who obeyed the risen and glorified Lord. We must receive the Holy Ghost as a breath from the lips of Jesus before we can know Him as a coöperating gale.

2. We must seek only the glory of Jesus. The main objective of the Holy Spirit in the present age is to glorify Christ. He withdraws Himself from observation with an infinite modesty (if we may use that word), but as light proceeding from an unseen source He casts its full radiance on the face of "the man, Christ Jesus." It is not likely, therefore, that He will yield Himself to us unless we also are devoted absolutely and in all simplicity to the same end. There is a sense in which the Spirit is not given, because Jesus is not glorified.

3. But—and this is the most pertinent point for our present purpose, the Holy Spirit's power proceeds along the line of the Word of God, as the electric message along the wires. It is His sword; the life-giving seed which He has vitalized; the word in which the Word is incarnated. Through long centuries He has been at work communicating to prepared natures the thoughts of God, and naturally He avails Himself of His prerogative. The ministry, therefore, which is most

carefully based on Scripture and honours Scripture and saturates itself with Scripture is the ministry which the Spirit of Truth can coöperate with in the most perfect abandonment. It is in harmony with these thoughts that in the monument of Bishop Phillips Brooks in Boston, which represents him standing in his pulpit with uplifted right hand, his left hand is pointing to the open Bible, whilst behind him Christ is standing, in the same pulpit, His hand resting on His servant's shoulder. It must be always so,—the opened Scripture and the coöperating Lord!

We would not, of course, suggest, even for a moment, that only those who adopt the method of expository preaching can claim that coöperating Presence, or that those who pose as expository preachers always enjoy it. God has put too great honour on men of the most diverse characteristics for us to dare to generalize or dogmatize after that fashion. All we are advancing now is, that the more carefully we keep to Scripture, the more of Scripture there is in our sermons, the more we deal with the whole tenor of the Word of God, the more probable it is that we shall supply the Holy Spirit with those arrows which He knows so well how to use, launching them into the hearts of sinners for their conviction, and the more we shall supply Him with the pure milk of the Word for the feeding of babes and the strong meat for the upbuilding of mature character.

In the following papers we will define and

illustrate what we conceive to be the true method of Expository Preaching, and then quote a number of reasons why it should bulk much more largely than it does in the ministry of the present day.

The present writer claims some right to speak to his brethren on this theme, as his own method, for better or for worse, has been almost wholly built on this model. In early life, as assistant minister with Rev. C. M. Birrell, he was able to study this method in one of its noblest exponents, and though he has lagged far behind that notable example, he has never ceased to follow its guiding light. It has been his experience that for a rather slender equipment and talent or learning, nothing serves to give such variety and attractiveness to pulpit work as the unstinting unfolding of Scripture in a series of discourses on a biography or a Book. The slender vine needs strong trellis-work (as the oak does not) to support her fragile stem and display her produce to the touch of sun and air!

EXPOSITION OF EXODUS 17:1-15

KEY-VERSE: "Then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim . . ."

On leaving the seashore, the march turned eastward towards the great Sinaitic mountains. The route is inexpressibly grand. On each side of the narrow pass rise peaks and precipices of every form and colour. Gray, red, brown, green, white, and black are the hues of those

entrance-gates of the most august temple in the world. From the earliest vestiges of history the Egyptian government had worked, in this valley, mines of copper and turquoise by convict labour. It is not improbable that there were many Hebrews among those wretched beings; and if so, Moses may have taken this route in order to release them.

On leaving Dophkah and entering the Wady Feirân, the whole camp began to suffer severely, owing to the failure of the water supply. The brook which waters the valley was dry, and the presence of vegetation which showed where it occasionally flowed, made the disappointment still more tantalizing. The word "Rephidim" signifies resting-places, and every one had been buoyed up by the happy expectations thus suggested. Obviously the contrast between the hope of the last two days and the reality was the more exasperating.

"And the people thirsted there for water." Hunger is bad enough to bear, but it affects only one organ of the body, whereas thirst sets the whole being on fire. It mounts to the brain and burns like fever in the blood. The little children were drooping like flowers; and the cattle, on the verge of exhaustion, lay panting on the ground. The scouts, sent into all neighbouring valleys, returned with the one report that there was no water anywhere.

1. **The Tempting of Massah.** First the people strove with Moses as having led them into this terrible position, ignoring the fact that their route was determined by the pillar of cloud. Their murmurings then became so threatening that Moses actually feared for his life, and finally they began to question whether Jehovah were among them or not. "They tempted the Lord;" *i. e.*, they questioned His providence, doubted His love and

care, and suggested that He had deserted them—and all this because He did not act in the way they had expected. Ignoring the lessons of the plagues, the marvels of the Exodus, the triumphant passage of the Red Sea, they actually questioned whether God were with them at all.

The same mood betrays itself to-day. There are abundant evidences of the existence and providence of God written on the page of creation and the tablets of our moral nature; but turning from these, men point to the hunger and thirst, the poverty and misery, the impurity, cruelty and self-will, which are so patent in our civilization, and cry: "If there be a God, why does He permit such things?" Then, when the heavens are still silent, they infer that there is no God; that the sky is an empty eye-socket, and that there is nothing better than to eat and drink, because death is an eternal sleep.

Has not something of that spirit infected our own peace? We have served God from our youth, have ever kept His Kingdom and honour before our eye, have denied ourselves for His sake, have reckoned that there was a special understanding and alliance between Him and us. Then suddenly we have been brought to our Rephidim, without one drop of water. We have come into some terrible situation of personal or relative suffering, have cried out for help, but there has been no evidence of a response. Then we have been inclined to doubt whether our religious life has not been one long deception. Does God care for me? Does He answer prayer? We ought to have said, God *is* with me; *He* is steering my boat; *He* is leading my pilgrimage; *He* is adequate for every emergency. It is sad indeed to hear the soul querulously plunged in complaint, instead of buoying itself up on victorious faith. Dare to say: God was with me in my

childhood, and *He* will never desert me, now that I am old and gray-headed; He was with me in six troubles, and cannot fail me in the seventh. He that spared not His own Son will in His own time and way certainly give me all things needed for this life and the next.

2. **Still the question arises, Why did God allow His people to suffer thus?** Without doubt, as is suggested afterwards, it was necessary to reveal them to themselves, that they might know the evil of their own hearts. "Know therefore," was the incontestable reproof of their leader in after days, "that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people. Remember, forget thou not, how thou provokest the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness, from the day that thou wentest forth out of the land of Egypt."

This stern discipline was also intended to make them rely on God rather than on Moses or circumstances. He suffered them to thirst, that He might make them know that man doth not live by rains and rivers only, but by God's providence, however it may come. Take, for instance, the child of wealth, whose estates, stocks, shares and bank-balance are a fourfold wall of iron against the intrusion of want. For such the daily providence of God is a nonentity. It is when all these have ceased to be his, and he is compelled to hang on the daily care of God, with no obvious means of support, that he offers the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer with absolute sincerity.

But there was a deeper reason than these. At the Exodus the Sinaitic peninsula was largely covered by the roving tribe of Amalek. This people was of great antiquity; indeed, Balaam said, "Amalek was the first of the nations." Driven by Assyria from their early seat

by the Persian gulf, they had travelled southwards, until they held the fastnesses of the desert as their own. They did not challenge the hosts of Israel on their arrival from their Egyptian bondage because they understood their destination to be Canaan, the route to which would soon take them out of their territories, or because they had left the seabord for mountain pastures, clothed at that period in their most attractive dress. But when Israel marched southwards, their progress was eyed with the utmost jealousy and suspicion. It was extremely distasteful to the Amalekite chieftains to learn that these aliens were enjoying the abundant pastures and palm-groves of an oasis like Elim. Probably a council of war was held, at which it was unanimously agreed that measures must be concerted for the arrest and turning back of the march. After the manner of the East, messengers had been sent out far and wide to summon all the available forces of the peninsula to the conflict, and until they assembled, orders were issued that light-armed troops should hang on the rear of the Israelites, cutting off its stragglers, pillaging its baggage and doing as much damage as possible. "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way as ye came forth out of Egypt, and how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God."

As God looked down on the land through which His people were slowly wending their way, He beheld those gathering hosts. He saw them mustering from the rocky fastnesses of Petra, from the rich pasture-grounds of Kadesh, and from the rolling downs, in which the mighty roots of the Lebanon-range end. It may be that at the very hour when this murmuring was rife, these marshalled hosts were within an hour's march of the camp

of Israel. He knew it all and suffered them to thirst that on the background of their pain He might work a supreme miracle of power, which would be their fortress and stronghold in the day of Amalek's attack.

The composure with which Moses prepared to resist Amalek; the absolute confidence with which Israel fell in with his measures of resistance, and the courage with which these undisciplined troops fought their first fight —would all be inexplicable unless we had had the record of that marvelous interposition which supplied water from the rock on the very eve of their fight.

Is not that the key to much of our own experience? Does not God lead us into sore straits, and deliver us out of them, that we may be prepared for greater troubles which He sees ahead. He smites rocks of granite, to touch which blisters our hands, and makes even these to yield supplies, that when presently we descry the troops of Amalek drawn up to dispute and arrest our progress, we may be of good courage and know that the Lord will fight for us.

3. **The Lesson of the Uplifted Rod.** We are told that Joshua discomfited Amalek with the edge of the sword, but the edge of the sword would have been unavailing had it not been for that uplifted rod!

At the opening of the battle the great leader was seen by the troops ascending a spur of rock, and first standing, then sitting, with the rod of God in his hand. Hour after hour he remained there with the rod uplifted, and as the afternoon advanced in that long, hard-fought day, it was noticed that on either side a venerable man stayed up his hands until the going down of the sun. That attitude has always been interpreted as significant of intercessory prayer. There are many among us who cannot go down into the battle, but who can sit on their

chair or lie on their couch and pray. But prayer is labour. We are told of Epaphras, when far from his people, that he laboured in prayer for the Colossian church. Without doubt prayer of the right kind means strenuous and exhausting labour. Like Moses, the soul that has learnt to travail in prayer needs up-bearing by stalwart friends. And such prayer makes all the difference in our fight against principalities and powers. When the arms of the church are uplifted, her troops prevail; and when let down, they are defeated. Amalek could not connect the two, but Israel connected them. The outside world cannot understand just now why the church is losing her hold on the masses, and her additions are so few; but we know—her arms are sunken to the ground. If only they could be uplifted again, as in the ancient days, the legions of the cross would quickly regain the ground that they have lost.

Why do you fail in your conflict against sin? Because you have ceased to pray. Why does that young Christian prevail? In the first place, he prays for himself; but, also, there are those who love him in distant places, who would think that they sinned if they ceased to pray for him.

This is all true, but there is a further truth. There is no word about prayer in the narrative, and sitting is not precisely the attitude of prayer. Were not that uplifted hand and rod rather the symbols of the presence and help of God? Moses not only prayed that God would help, but affirmed by his attitude that He was helping, and that Amalek was being driven before the Lord and His host. This interpretation is confirmed by the subsequent action of Moses, in building an altar and calling it Jehovah-nissi; *i. e.*, "The Lord is my banner."

The banner used of the ancients was only a pole, with a bright metal ornament at the top. Moses' rod, therefore, was a banner in the Oriental sense; but a banner for what? For the host of Israel? No; but for that other host, the host of God's unseen embattled warriors. Well was it that this should be written in a book and rehearsed for Joshua. It was thus that he received the first inkling of the great truth which was fully revealed to him on the plains of Jericho, when the Angel of the Covenant said, "I am come as captain of another host, a third host—the Lord's!"

This is the key to victory. You may be peevish and petulant to-day because you look only to Moses; *i. e.*, to human strength and help; but directly you look beyond Moses to God, you become strong and glad, and in Rephidim, the name of which you had changed to Meribah or Massah, you shall gain the victory of your life.

4. **There is a mystical side to all this.** Of course, Israel stands for the church in her warfare against the wicked spirits that rule the darkness of this world. Amalek stands for all that opposes the Kingdom of our God, and which resists the deliverance of the world from the hand of its enemy. "We wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers." The Rock is obviously our Lord Jesus, who was smitten for us and bruised for our sins. Out of His side, pierced by one of the soldiers, issued forth blood and water. "Rock of Ages cleft for me! Let the water and the blood from Thy riven side that flowed."

The church must drink of that Water. Israel drank of the spiritual Rock, and that Rock was Christ. We without stint may drink of His gift, which is the Holy Ghost. And then will we be able to cope with her spir-

itual foes. Pentecost preceded the first sufferings and missionary efforts of the church; and it must always be so, both with the individual and the community.

Drink deeply, O children of God, for Amalek will be upon you to-morrow; but he will have no power at all against those who have cleansed themselves in the healing stream of the blood, and have learned to drink of that Living Water.

EXPOSITORY PREACHING—WHAT IT IS

CHAPTER TWO

II

EXPOSITORY PREACHING—WHAT IT IS

There are many kinds of preaching, and he is the wise and successful man who knows how to vary them. As the husbandman rotates his crops, and adopts many methods to extract the utmost response from the soil, so in the spiritual realm "the vetches are beaten out with a staff and the cummin with a rod." (Isa. 38:23.)

Our Lord's first sermon was an example of the *topical* method. He read out His text, interpreted it, drew out the doctrine of it, illustrated it by Scripture examples, and was proceeding to apply it, when He was interrupted by the mad fury of His audience. *Biographical* preaching has found a chief exponent in our day in the masterly analysis of character given by Dr. Whyte, of Edinburgh, laying hold of the salient features and characteristics, and enforcing them for imitation or warning. *Doctrinal* preaching used to be more in vogue than it is, and found noble examples especially in the Scotch pulpits. It is a great treat to hear a sermon that gathers together various portions of Scripture and builds on their collation and comparison some sublime aspect of Divine truth, much as a scientist would from a number of isolated instances deduce the great natural law

which coördinates them. It is well, sometimes, to have recourse to the *hortatory* method, in which the preacher exhorts his congregation to some neglected duty, to repent, to administer their property with more punctilious care for the claims of God, or to undertake some fresh field of activity. But among all these *Expository* Preaching should have a very conspicuous place. It should be the standing dish; nay, it is the table on which all the dishes are placed. From the point of view of this paper there is no reason why each of the foregoing should not find a place in the scheme of expository discourse.

Probably the ideal is that followed by the late Dr. W. M. Taylor, of New York, who said: "My own practice has been, for many years, to give up one of the services of each Lord's Day to the systematic exposition of some book of Scripture, leaving the other free for the presentation of such subjects as may be suggested by the occurrences of the times or the circumstances of my people. This division I have felt to be not only very convenient, but also extremely serviceable."

It is necessary to indicate the mistakes that have been made in regard to the nature of the kind of preaching for which we plead—mistakes which have brought it into disrepute in many quarters. We do not mean, for instance, that the preacher should take a longer or shorter chapter and preface his remarks by saying, "Dear brethren, I propose to make a few remarks on this portion of

Scripture," and so proceed to utter a few pious platitudes about the successive verses. This is milk and water with a vengeance, especially water, and that not hot. If the man of the world were to drop into such a parody of preaching, he might fairly go off after the first five minutes, thinking that religion might do well enough for women and children, but had nothing for him. A preacher of that sort, giving a lecture on the Minor Prophets, came finally to the Book of Amos. "We have now come to Amos," he said; "what shall we do with him?" A man sitting in the rear of the house said, loud enough to be heard by his neighbours, "He can have my seat, for I'm going home." This is one great advantage in open-air preaching; the audience departs unless there is enough honey to attract and keep the bees.

Still less, by expository preaching, do we mean that the preacher should give an exhaustive and exhausting digest of all the commentaries to which he has access. Congregations want results, and not the process by which they are acquired. It is necessary, of course, that the expository preacher should regard his paragraph or chapter under all the varying lights flashed on it from different minds, but there is no need to marshal all these venerable and learned men in the pulpit and give them the opportunity of demolishing one another. When people want food they are impatient with learned discussions as to the most wholesome dietary.

It is also a mistaken view of expository preaching which leads the minister to dwell minutely and particularly on every point in the Scripture with which he is dealing. Pre-Raphaelite painting has its merits, but in these hurrying days it is necessary to concentrate the mind on some one striking figure or conception. Men will not stop to count the number of petals in a daisy.

It is also possible, when expository preaching is rightly practised, to combine the didactic with the passionate, teaching with intensity, and explanation with appeal. John Knox was a prince among expositors. Indeed, it is to him that Scotland owes the custom still observed by the majority of its ministers, of devoting at least one of their discourses on each Lord's Day to the regular and consecutive exposition of some book of Scripture. In the First Book of Discipline, which was drawn up mainly by him, we have the following direction: "We think it most expedient that the Scriptures be read in order—that is, that some one book of the Old and the New Testaments be begun, and orderly read to the end. And the same *we judge of preaching, where the minister for the most part remaineth in one place;* for this skipping and divagation from place to place, be it in reading or be it in preaching, we judge not so profitable to edify the church." But that exposition in his hands was no languid, lifeless or scholastic explanation of the passage under consideration is clear from this graphic description

of him in his last days by James Melville: "I heard him teach the prophecies of Daniel that summer and the winter following. In the opening of his text he was moderate for the space of half an hour; but when he entered on the application he made me so to shiver (*Scottice,* 'qrue') and tremble that I could not hold my pen to write. He was very weak, but before he had done with his sermon he was so active and vigourous that it seemed as if he would knock the pulpit in pieces (*Scottice,* 'ding the pulpit in blads') and fly out of it." Wherever he laboured, his method was the same. The English Ambassador at the Court of Scotland described what he had himself seen, when he wrote to Cecil: "I assure you the voice of one man is able in an hour to put more life in us than six hundred trumpets blustering in our ears."

We are now able, in the light of these distinctions, to define Expository Preaching as *the consecutive treatment of some book or extended portion of Scripture* on which the preacher has concentrated head and heart, brain and brawn, over which he has thought and wept and prayed, until it has yielded up its inner secret, and the spirit of it has passed into his spirit. That passion which we were just remarking in John Knox revealed itself in Rutherford and Chalmers, in Cairns and Caird. It is not an artifice nor a trick; it is probably the possession of a man's nature by the Spirit which hides in true and sacred words, as sparks lie hid in flint. It is thus that

the spirit of nature is concealed from all save her wooers, who wait patiently until she coyly drops her veil and shows her face. The highest point of sermon-utterance is when a preacher is "possessed," and certainly, in the judgment of the writer, such possession comes oftenest and easiest to a man who has lived, slept, walked and eaten in fellowship with a passage for the best part of a week.

But let us consider more particularly the method adopted by the Expository Preacher. We will suppose that he had been led to choose either the Book of Exodus or the Epistle to the Hebrews. He will perhaps have made his selection for the coming autumn and winter before he starts on his summer vacation. With all his other preparations for golf, or fishing, or camping out, he takes a handy pocket copy of the chosen Scripture. On the moor or in the hammock, within sound of the break of the waves or of the crunching of glaciers, he reads again and again, until the central lesson, the *motif,* begins to reveal itself. The next step is to roughly divide the matter under some general divisions, which will be broken up ultimately into smaller and yet smaller ones, the one condition being that each paragraph or chapter shall contain one complete thought.

For instance, I am now at work with the Book of Exodus. Sometimes a few verses give me concisely and completely all that is needed for an effective sermon; as for example, 2: 23-25 or

6:2-9. But at another time the whole chapter must be compressed into one discourse, as chapter 18, which could not be subdivided without serious detriment to the symmetry and force of the lesson it contains. The Epistle to the Hebrews is one of the easiest books in the Bible for division and subdivision. The least intelligent after reading it once or twice can see the natural compartments of this wonderful treatise; but the pieces of separate mosaic combine in a picture to which each is necessary, and none is complete without the rest. This earliest process of parcelling out the rich tract of land before us is one of the most fascinating experiments of the preacher's life; and he contrives, as far as possible, that in every portion there should be a tiny bit of mountain moorland with its heather, some granite rocks, some foothills, corn for the gleaners, and flowers for the children.

When one has made one's own divisions it is time to turn to see what others have done in the same directions. Often what seemed to be the best and most original of your findings will have been anticipated. Not unfrequently you will alight on the divisions of a Maclaren or a Storrs so perfect that you cannot but substitute it for your own. Generally the collision of another man's brain with yours will strike out some fresh conception, which carries the likeness of the father and mother of its parentage.

When this is settled a great deal is settled.

The land has been divided among the tribes, and the tribes into families, and the families into individual plots. It only remains to discover the pivot sentence in the next group of verses which you are proposing to treat. That phrase "pivot sentence" is absolutely important. There is in each paragraph one sentence on which it resolves, or a point on which it impinges, like the rocking stones left by the glacier period in balance, as though angels had been playing at a pastime of herculean feats.

It is a mistake for the preacher to read out a whole long paragraph as the text of his sermon. Should he do so, the ordinary mind wearily anticipates a long discourse, and all the boys and girls, who are expected to repeat or write out the text as a Sunday task, wince. The text should be appetising, like the liquors which, I am told, are taken by *bon-vivants* before their meals. It should be terse and crisp, bright and short, easily remembered and quotable. In every chapter and paragraph there is one such. In that mentioned from the Book of Exodus, the chord or keynote is struck in "Be thou for the people God-ward." If the preacher announces this as his text, attention is awakened and interest excited. People wonder what he will make of it; and the stranger within the gates will not suppose that the sermon is one of a series.

It is a profound mistake for the Expository Preacher to spend any time in recapitulation. He

ought never to utter the phrase, "As I was saying last Sunday." There is no need for it, and it only conveys an immediate sense of the incompleteness of the present address. Each sermon should be complete in itself and should not require to be propped up against another to make it stand. Equally unsuitable is it to talk of what you may have to say next Sunday, unless under special circumstances, such as the immensity of the theme, of which you could only give one aspect. But these tricks for catching audiences are not the best. Give the people something worth coming for, and they will come. At the same time it is undeniable that young regular hearers will become interested as soon as they see that their pastor is pursuing a regular line of study and teaching, and will make every endeavour not to miss one link in the chain of thought.

When the pivot-text is chosen, it is desirable, so far as possible to weave into the structure of the sermon all the main points of the surrounding paragraph. There is no absolute law in the matter except one's own sense of the fitness of things. Just as all the objects in the field of vision focus in the lens of the eye, and finally in the minute filament of the optic nerve, so the thoughts, images and suggestions of the context should pass through the chosen motto to the heart of the people.

The main burden of all our preaching, as we have seen, must be Jesus Christ, and the expositor

questions often how much of Christ there is present and how he can make Him known. He remembers that the Lord told His critics that Moses wrote of Him (John 5:46) and that He interpreted to the two who walked to Emmaus in *all* the Scriptures the things concerning Himself (Luke 25:27). Did not the angel that showed the beloved apostle the crowding glories of the unseen assure him that the testimony of Jesus was the spirit of prophecy? (Rev. 19:10.)

Expository preachers have the two experiences set forth in our Lord's parables. Sometimes when they start on the preparation of their sermon, seeking the goodly pearls of truth, they suddenly come on one of great price, which so excels the others that they lose sight of all the rest and sell all for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord. The paragraph becomes a veritable transfiguration mountain, on which they lose sight even of Moses and Elijah and see no man but Jesus only. At other times they resemble the ploughman represented in the alternate parable, who was ploughing over a hard and rather uninteresting field and suddenly heard his plough clink against metal. Immediately he dropped the ploughtail and ran forward to see what he had struck. He had alighted on a strong metal chest containing the savings of a life, which the owner had buried for safety, but had died suddenly without giving the clue of its whereabouts to his children. Many a track of Scrip-

ture, when we first read it over, seems as though it were hardly worth considering, and then the hidden Christ is suddenly discovered; and to have found Him is to have come on a mine of treasure from which the whole congregation will be enriched on the following Lord's Day.

It was said of Philip Henry that he did not shoot the arrow of the Word *over the heads* of his audience in affected rhetoric, nor *under their feet* by homely expressions, but *to their hearts* in close and lively application. Such should be our aim in dealing with any part of God's Word; we must apply it to each individual in the audience. Each bearer must be as one who stands on the seashore on a moonlight night. The waves of Scriptural teaching must break at his feet, and the path of light over the waters must come to where he stands. We must preach *to* the people as well as before them. It has been well said that a good sermon should resemble a good portrait, in looking directly at each in the room and saying, I have a message for thee. It is not enough to expatiate lucidly or eloquently on a passage of Scripture; we must show each person that it has a message for him, that it belongs to him, that he must heed it and obey.

THE ECONOMY OF FORCE—EXPOSITION OF EXODUS 18:1-27

There is a noteworthy parallel between the circumstances narrated in this chapter and those of which we are informed in Acts 6. Here the Hebrew people, emerging from centuries of slavery and oppression, which had almost obliterated the spirit of nationality, suddenly assumes a highly organized condition. Out of Jethro's suggestion sprang an organization which laid the foundations of the national policy, and has existed with more or less permanence amid all the other changes that have swept over that remarkable race. In Acts 6 a similar movement was necessitated by the immense increase of converts. "In those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Hellenists against the Hebrews, and The Twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said: "It is not fit that we should forsake the Word of God and serve tables. Look ye out, therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." (Acts 6:1-6.)

In each case the increased organization was a sign of vitality and led to the immediate strengthening and increase of the entire movement. It is a great forward step in evolution when the bony case which had been exterior, as in the crab, becomes interior, as in the mammal. Life always tends toward increased complexity in organization.

There is little to detain us in the circumstances which led up to this great step of advance. Whether Jethro was the father-in-law or brother-in-law of Moses is still undecided by the experts, and does not greatly concern

us. The Hebrew word may mean either. He had given shelter to Zipporah and her two sons until he heard of the Exodus, and then he crossed the peninsula from the extreme east to the Mount of God, somewhere in the near neighbourhood of Horeb. First, he desired to renew the friendly relations, which had subsisted during the forty years of companionship in pastoral and tribal interests; and secondly, he desired to restore the wife and boys whom he had received as a sacred trust.

The meeting was thoroughly Oriental. On the announcement of his approach, Moses went out to meet him, knelt down, and touched the ground with his forehead; then kissing his relative's hand, he rose and kissed him on both cheeks. Each asked the other of his welfare with the minuteness and prolixity still characteristic of the sons of the desert, with whom time is a less precious commodity than with ourselves. The greetings of husband and wife, of father and children would probably be reserved for the privacy of the tent.

As Moses told of the marvelous dealings of God with Israel, not only in delivering them from Pharaoh, but during all the travail of their journey, Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which Jehovah had shown and burst out into an ascription of adoration and praise. Perhaps, up to that hour, like the generality of the heathen, he had believed in a plurality of gods and regarded the God of Israel as only one among many equals. But under the marvelous recital given by Moses, he renounced that creed and declared his belief that Jehovah was supreme over all gods. How much might be done if only religious men to-day would recount their experiences! Many a wavering scale would be turned in favour of true religion, if only you would begin to tell of God's dealings with your own life. "Go home to thy

friends," said our Lord to the man from whom he had cast a legion of demons, "and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee."

It is remarkable that Jethro appears to have acted as priest in the sacrifice which followed. We have already been told that the sheikh was also the priest of Midian (Ex. 3:1). Like Melchizedek he was the priest of the Most High God. The fact of Moses and Aaron and the elders of Israel participating in the sacred feast which followed, shows that they recognized orders of religious life and priestly administration outside the limits of their own race, and this confirms us in the view, which surely needs no arguing, and which Malachi so clearly teaches, "that from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, God's name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense is offered in his name, and a pure offering." (Mal. 1:11.)

The spectacle he witnessed on the following day was remarkable. From morning till evening he beheld Moses sitting in the midst of a great throng of people, slowly ploughing his way through an immense number of causes, which were submitted to his adjudication. Even if we pare down the numbers of the Exodus to half or a quarter of a million of people, it is easy to see that an overwhelming task lay on the lawgiver, who was called upon in his single person to combine the legislative and judicial functions. The difficulty lay not only in the quantity but the quality of the people. The Hebrew character has always been stiff-necked and intractable. But, in addition, they had just emerged from generations of slavery, with all its debasing and demoralizing effects. There was as yet no Decalogue nor code of laws. The very effect of their recent emancipation was to induce the idea that they were free to do as they

chose. The first experiences of the French Revolution were bewildering and disappointing to all thoughtful souls. How Wordsworth laments it! It seemed as if all hope of Liberty, Equality and Brotherhood was to be drowned in a deluge of sensuality and bloodshed. So with Israel, they were no longer under the despotic rule of Pharaoh and his myrmidons. Their knowledge of Jehovah was extremely vague. There was no general standard of appeal. The very rebound from centuries of oppression was in the direction of self-assertion and lawlessness. In addition, the recent rout of Amalek may have left in the possession of the victors an immense amount of costly property, as in the experience of Gideon afterwards. (Judges 8:25, etc.) Disputes about the proper division of these may have greatly added to the weight of that day's business.

In any case, at the end of the day Moses was absolutely worn out, and even then the people were not satisfied. There was therefore justice in Jethro's remark: "Wasting thou wilt waste away, both thou and this people that is with thee." Jethro therefore suggested a division of labour, founded on the system still in vogue among the Arabs. Causes were in the first instance to be judged by rulers of tens, which recalls our own things, from which there was an appeal to the rulers of fifties, from them to the rulers of hundreds, and finally to the rulers of thousands. Difficult causes, which the rulers of thousands felt themselves incompetent to decide, were reserved for the judgment of Moses. After referring this to God (v. 23), as was his wont, Moses adopted this good advice, and by this arrangement the whole nation profited immensely.

The advantages were obvious. Moses was henceforth able to concentrate himself on the higher branches of

his great calling. He was for the people *God-ward,* as mediator, looking into the bosom of God, where, as Hooker says, "law hath her seat." He had also time to bring the difficult causes to God. Then, turning to the people, he taught them the statutes of the laws, and showed them the way wherein they should walk, and the work they should do.

Next, it immediately developed a large number of men, whose very existence had, up to that moment, been hardly realized. In every community there is an untold wealth of latent talent. To every man grace is given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. The King gives each of His servants the charge of talents, and none is absolutely destitute. It must have been rather surprising, however, to Moses to discover that there was a complete equipment for all the offices that had to be filled. "He chose able men out of all Israel." These men might have developed into critics and schemers, but from the moment that they were entrusted with responsibility they became staunch and useful allies. Not only were their talents saved from wastage and developed in useful directions, but the men themselves were redeemed and purified, and their characters saved from that prostitution of the best which always becomes the worst.

The congregation also profited greatly by the swiftness with which disputes and quarrels were dealt with. Nothing is more hurtful to the individual or community than to leave a sore open. The longer a controversy remains unadjusted, the worse the tangle becomes; the more hot words are spoken, the more bystanders become involved. "Agree," said our Lord, "with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him."

We may apply this subject to Church Administration and Christian Service.

1. **Church Administration.** It is a mistake for any one person, be he minister or layman, to monopolize many offices. Some ministers insist on keeping every department of church-life and church-work under control. Some Sunday school superintendents have apparently never learned to educate their teachers to maintain the order of the school, or the children to feel that they may fill useful offices; and some church officials, in their desire to serve the church, prefer to undertake more duties than they can perform satisfactorily, instead of setting to work to educate and develop the younger men and women about them. Mr. Moody said, shrewdly: "It is better to set a hundred men to work than to do the work of a hundred men." You do a service to a man when you evoke his latent faculty. It is no kindness to others or service to God to do more than your share in the sacred duties of church-life. For the hand to do the work of the foot, or the eye to intrude into the province of the ear, is to introduce anarchy and discord into body and soul. We are told that when Saul saw any mighty man or any valiant man he took him unto himself. (1 Sam. 14:52.) This is the law of church consolidation and expansion.

We must have, in every Christian community, our Moses, Aaron, and Hur—men who give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word, men who are to us God-ward, men who can enquire of God, who can teach statutes and laws, who can show the way in which we should walk and the work we should do. In every Christian community we must have the men of affairs, whose character is admirably summed up in Jethro's

words, *Men of Ability!* Jethro evidently expected that there would be one man in ten who would commend himself as exceptionally able, and though to-day's standard of ability is higher than ever, the estimate is not too sanguine. They must be *Men of Piety!* "Such as fear God." He who fears God will regard man; the unjust judge did neither. The apostles asked for seven men, "of good report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom." *Men of Truth!* There can be no real piety without truthfulness, so that this qualification is, in fact, included in the last; and yet there is a semblance of piety, which is not over-scrupulous as to veracity. This, however, is a bastard growth. *Men of Uncorruptible Honour!* In the East it is rare to find the office of judge exercised without a strong susceptibility to bribes. Like the sons of Samuel, the judges turn aside after lucre, take bribes and pervert judgment. At whatever cost, let our nation preserve the great traditions which have always attached to our bench and legal profession. In all walks of life unbiased impartiality is of priceless worth to the community which is thus endowed.

We must also, in every church, have our warriors, who can encounter Amalak; our workers, whose deft fingers can build our tabernacle; our financiers, who will see that no part of the church finance suffers; our singers; our aged men and women, who can sustain the duties of perpetual intercession; our boys and girls, inspiring us with their boundless hope and inexhaustible activity; our sufferers, who teach us tenderness and patience. Some must open the doors, some light the lamps, some lead the service of song, some preach, and others teach. There is no one who is not his neighbour's superior in some respect. There is no one from whom his neighbour may not learn something. It was necessary

for Jethro to cross the desert to give Moses the conception of this organization, which, one would suppose, ought to have occurred to him during his own ponderings over his failure to discharge his enormous tasks. "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of thee." (1 Cor. 12:14-31.)

Some day we shall stand before our Lord, who at His own judgment seat, which must be distinguished from the Judgment of the Great White Throne, will allot our rewards. At such time He will pursue a far different method than that adopted amongst even the best of us. We applaud the man who reaps the results; but He will equally congratulate those who plouged and sowed to produce them. We allot the crown and palm to the pastor or evangelist whose fervent appeals win the largest number of accessions to the church; but Christ will not forget the verger and the charwoman, the treasurer and the secretary, the organ blower, and those who bring refreshment to the harvest field. The players on instruments shall be there as well as the singers; and he that sowed shall rejoice with him who reaped. To each the rewards will be apportioned not according to the apparent results, but to the faithfulness with which each fulfilled his humble task. The smallest wheel in a big machine is able by its precision to promote or its inexactitude to impair the entire movement, just as a dispute among a few girls or in one class of operatives may throw out of employment hundreds of thousands and affect a whole district. It is necessary, therefore, in adjusting the rewards, that none be overlooked who have contributed, however slightly, to the general result.

2. **The same principle applies in the spreading of the knowledge of Christ.** There is too strong a tendency in

most congregations to leave the work of saving the lost to a salaried class. The plan of sending substitutes may have its advantages for heathen lands, but it cannot become universal without serious loss to individual believers, as to the church and the world. Your personal witness for Christ is an imperative obligation. You cannot evade it by any excuse as to your temperament, your nervousness, or your circumstances. The King makes no exceptions. His command is decisive. If we belong to His church we are bound to proclaim His love and death to every creature within our reach. You must speak of Him to your brother, your neighbour, and your fellow-citizens, saying, "Know the Lord." He that heareth must say, *Come*. In this respect the converts on the mission fields set us a notable example, as we gather from the reports handed in to the recent Edinburgh Missionary Conference.

Bishop Tucker, of Uganda, wrote: "The work of winning the souls of the people of this country to Christ is really being done by the natives themselves, under the supervision of the foreign missionaries. Dr. John Ross stated that of the twenty thousand church members in Manchuria less than one hundred had been led to Christ solely by the missionaries, and the remaining nineteen thousand nine hundred by the devoted labours of these newly converted souls. Dr. Moffet, of Korea, has stated that the Korean Christians for the last ten years have been bringing in the converts faster than the missionaries have been able to provide instruction for them.

It is quite common, says Dr. Mott, in Korea, in Manchuria, and other parts of China, for Christians to pledge themselves to give a certain number of days to the work of public preaching, as well as to speaking to individuals one by one, subscribing their time just as we in the

homelands subscribe our money. At one meeting one church member promised to devote to work of this kind during the following year one hundred and eighty days, and in reporting at the annual meeting a year later he apologised because he had been able to give only one hundred and sixty-nine days.

In view of these facts, shall we not, each one, from to-day dedicate ourselves to Christ for this service? Is it impossible to promise our Lord that, if He will open the door of opportunity and give us a tongue and wisdom which cannot be gainsaid, we are willing to speak to some one daily on His claims? We shall not, then, have to assume any yoke of mere legalism, nor shall we force the matter on unwilling ears; but as the opportunity offers we shall look for the uprising impulse and the needed message. It is not what we do for Him, but what He does for us, that really tells.

THE ADVANTAGES OF THE EXPOSITORY METHODS

CHAPTER THREE

III

THE ADVANTAGES OF THE EXPOSITORY METHODS

There are many advantages in the Expository Method. 1. It saves the preacher from getting into ruts. One of the holiest and best informed ministers I ever knew died in comparatively young life, before he had won that position in the great city of his adoption which his powers merited. His congregation was small, and his church weak. On enquiring the reason, I found that he was always dwelling on the one subject of sanctification, till the people wearied of it. He would return at the end of the week from a series of convention meetings, where his words had fallen on the hearts of the people like rain on newly-mown lawns, and repeated from his own pulpit, Sunday after Sunday, the discourses which had produced such evident and blessed results. The effect on a stated audience was, however, disappointing, simply because of the iteration of the same lessons, the retreading of the same paths.

Every minister has his special aptitudes. We feel, each one, the drawing of certain subjects. Those which have been our own guiding stars and beacon lights naturally and frequently occur to us for public discourse. It is easy to talk of

the old time-worn themes which have become fitted to our hand. And the only hope for many of us is to be compelled to handle those new aspects of the old truths which are suggested by continuous exposition.

It is related by Dr. John Dick, the well-known professor of theology in Scotland, that he went, in the early days of his ministry, to a neighbouring clergyman in the deepest distress, saying: "What shall I do? I have preached all I know to the people, and have nothing else to give them. I have gone through the catechism; and what have I more?" To which his friend replied: "The catechism! Take the Bible, man. It will take you a long while to exhaust that."

To use Martin Luther's simile, the Bible is like a fair and spacious orchard, in which all kinds of trees grow, and I quite agree with a friend of mine, that the preacher has no right to inflict nothing but his special fruit on his congregation. Granted that he prefers apples, there may be many in his congregation who prefer plums, pears, or cherries; and surely he is not justified to leave these wasting on the trees whilst he serves up only apples, apples, apples. He is sent into the Land of Promise to bring back specimens of the fruits that grow there, and should return with the grapes of Eschol, the pomegranates and melons, the golden oranges in baskets of silver filigree work, as well as the apples that seem to him the very quintessence of delight.

2. Continuous exposition compels the preacher to handle big themes. We are all tempted to evade the greatest texts because of their transcendent glory and majesty. We assure ourselves that some day we shall have reached a plateau of such eminence, either of holiness or knowledge, that we shall be able to take a snapshot of the Himalaya ranges that stand as a wall against the sky, and for the present we will postpone the execution of the intention we have formed of dealing with these stupendous themes.

Take for instance the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel, or the high-priestly prayer of the seventeenth chapter, or the opening verse of Hebrews 1, or the closing verses of Romans 8; a minister puts these away, saying: "I am not able to handle themes like these, and I do not desire to announce them as my text, lest I excite hopes that I cannot fulfil, and make myself a laughing-stock. Mine is the sparrow's wing, and I have no pinions for these heaven-piercing peaks. I am not sufficient for these things." Therefore some of us never preach on the greatest texts of the Bible. We choose little snippets but not great tracts of truth. It is a profound mistake. If you are conscious of being the man with one talent, exercise it on a big text; the text will insensibly lift up yourself and your congregation. To announce it will appeal to the heightened imagination of your congregation, and this will telepathically react on you.

But these reasonings do not arise or are deemed unworthy of consideration when the course of exposition brings you suddenly on one of these outstanding paragraphs. It is as when a ship that had been pursuing the tortuous wanderings of some high-banked river suddenly emerges on the wide still waters of a lake, mountain-encircled. The passengers expect to be carried across the waters as they have been conducted along the stream; and as they congregate on deck, possibly they think less than ever of the skill which is guiding them than of the noble panorama unfolded to their gaze.

It is a sad discovery to find the woeful ignorance which prevails in congregations to-day of the great basic truths of religion, which should underpin the Christian experience. Probably we all shrink from preaching doctrinal sermons as such. The days are past when our people can stand chunks of doctrine piled on their plates for their digestion. They are not able to masticate or digest them. Minced meat—and minced small—is more to their mind. But if we deal systematically and continuously with the Word of God, we come on the classic passages, on which theology has been built. When the geologist stands with you at the foot of the chalk-cliffs it is both easy and natural for him to pass from the single fossil he is handling to discuss the age out of which it came, and its relative position with other ages that have registered themselves above or below

the stratum to which it belongs. Your people might present it. But what can they say when you announce as your text 1 Peter 1:1-5, because you have determined to take that epistle as the subject of your next Expository course! The advantages are enormous in this direction; and the wise minister will alternate the various books of the Bible, following a book of the Old Testament with one of the New, or the story of our Lord or of His apostles with the study of the Epistle to the Hebrews or a letter of the Apostle Paul.

3. The expositor will be led to handle subjects which would not otherwise occur to him. In every congregation there are touchy people, who need to be dealt with in regard to some duties they omit, or indiscretions or faults they commit. If the pastor were to select a text bearing on these points, they would almost certainly suppose that he was levelling his sermon on them and holding them up before the congregation for criticism and reproof. Men will stand a direct challenge in private. David did not resent Nathan's "Thou art the man," when they two met in the inner chamber of the palace. But when the unnamed prophet from Judah rebuked Jeroboam before all the people that were gathered around the altar, he resented the impertinence bitterly, putting forth his hand from the altar, and crying, "Lay hold of him." Men cannot endure being preached at.

A continuous course of exposition, however,

obviates any such imputation. If a passage seems unusually pertinent to some person in the audience, he cannot resent the warning or appeal which the preacher bases upon it. If, for instance, there is a wealthy farmer in the congregation who is a notorious skinflint, and not too careful of the interests of his labourers or of the poor around him, he cannot accuse the minister of personalities if, in the regular course of teaching, the sermon is based on Amos 8:4-7. In the course of my ministry I have often found that the old Hebrew prophets would say for me all that I wanted to say on Social Economics. Or suppose there is a family quarrel afoot, arising from the bitter disposition and caustic tongue of man or wife, the whole family cannot resent the plain instruction of the pulpit, which in the ordinary course is dwelling on Colossians 3:18-21. Young women who overdress will not think that the pastor is hitting at them if he has come, in expounding Isaiah, to 3:16-26.

There is not a phase of character or experience which is not touched on and treated in the contents of Scripture; and it is a profound loss to a congregation if it is not fed on the entire wheat of the Divine Word. Eliminate from our food-stuffs one ingredient, and the children around your board will pay dearly for your neglect. Similarly it is impossible to omit any of the teachings, reproofs, corrections, or instructions of Scripture without leaving the man of God

incomplete and inadequately furnished unto good works. "Every Scripture inspired of God is profitable."

This is why the short term of ministry, too much in vogue in the present day, is so greatly to be deplored. It does not give the minister the chance of unfolding the Bible to his people. He therefore wanders aimlessly over the entire surface of the boundless prairie, browsing here and there, according to his whim, instead of leading his flock systematically from one fenced-in portion to another, until in due time the whole has been covered and has yielded its contribution to their health and well-being.

Continuous exposition not only saves a minister from the imputation of personalities, but creates a well-instructed congregation. It is surprising how low is the average of Bible knowledge among our people, which arises in part from the use of selected texts and passages. It will shock some people to hear it said, but I profoundly believe it, that the widespread habit of using these booklets, in which tiny tit-bits are served up for consumption, is as hurtful spiritually as it would be physically were we always to stand at a quick-lunch bar to get our meals. They are very well if used with the Bible, but extremely harmful when used alone; and to the widespread habit of confining our Bible study to these may be attributed the surprising ignorance of the Book which is acknowledged to be the Book of books, whose praises

are on every tongue, but the real knowledge of which is less than of the standard works of fiction or poetry.

An amusing instance of this ignorance occurred a generation ago in the British House of Commons. Mr. John Bright, a distinguished member of the Society of Friends, alluding to Mr. Robert Lowe and others, who rebelled against the Reform Bill of the Liberal leader, said that they had gone into a Cave of Adullam. Two members, leaving the House, were overheard discussing the metaphor. One said to the other, "I say, where did Bright get that illustration of his to-night about the cave?" "Oh," was the reply, "I see what you're up to; do you suppose I haven't read the 'Arabian Nights'?" These men were probably church-goers, for in those days most public men attended church, for appearances' sake. But let us not smile at this mistake, lest we be liable to be held up for repeating it. There are parts of our Bible which we peruse pretty frequently, and they begin to show signs of wear and tear, but other and much more considerable portions are almost as fresh and new as when they came from the printer, twenty years ago.

The expositor of Scripture occupies a field in which he has no rival. If we discuss politics, *the* professional politician or leader writer can easily distance us. If we deal with social questions, the pages of our monthly magazines will furnish bet-

ter material, more up to date, and more highly spiced. We might go further and say that questions of metaphysics or philosophy are more likely to be handled well by brilliant thinkers and writers than by the majority of our hard-driven ministers. But when we leave these subjects and bend ourselves to the careful and studied unfolding of the treasures hidden in Scripture, we are monarchs of all we survey, and our right there is none to dispute. What a mistake it is to vacate an unassailable position as the expositors of Scripture and descend into lower levels, where we expose ourselves to invidious comparisons! Our prerogative is to command ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God by manifestations of the truth, and by this sign alone can we conquer.

When Richard of England, on his way back from the Crusades, was waylaid by his enemies, and imprisoned in a remote castle in Austria, his bereaved subjects had no clue to his whereabouts. But in his household there was a French musician, Blondin, who resolved to discover his master. If he had used the methods which the statesmen of the realm were employing, he would have stood at a great disadvantage, because they were adepts in their business; but there was one art in which he stood alone. The king and he had spent long hours together as true troubadours, inventing lays and sonnets, with which they two were alone acquainted. This was his perquisite, his talisman,

his clue; and singing these lays through Europe beneath the windows of each frowning fortress, he finally heard them repeated by a manly voice which he knew and loved, and in that repetition was assured that he had discovered the prison of his captured lord. This led to Richard's emancipation by the payment of a heavy fine. So the minister of the gospel, like another troubadour, has to go through the world with one instrument in his hand—the Bible—the strains of which he must elicit with no uncertain touch, confident that they will secure a deep response from the heart of man. From each man's conscience in God's sight the answer comes back to the Word of the Eternal, which proves that the Creator of the one was the Author of the other. No one can vie with the minister in this special office, which has been entrusted to him by Christ when He said, through the apostle, to all His Timothies: "I charge thee in the sight of God . . . preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching; for the time will come when they will not endure sound (*i. e.*, healthful doctrine); but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts."

But the last argument that we will advance here for continuous exposition is that, while it honours the Word of God, it gives immense force to the ministry that is based upon it. We are so familiar with the spectacle that it fails to im-

press us that during the delivery of a sermon the Bible lies open, as though the preacher were giving it an utterance. In a sense we may apply to the gospel ministry statements originally made of our Lord. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld its glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father."

This has been the stronghold of the Protestant Church. Before the Reformation the priest occupied almost the entire space in the eye of his contemporaries. The sacraments became an unintelligible mummery, the truths of the gospel receded further and further into the distance and were veiled by the grossest superstitions. The Bible was practically a lost Book, and it was the desire of the ecclesiastics of the age that it should remain so.

Luther's discovery of the Bible on the shelves of the monastery dated a new epoch in the history of Europe. True, Wyclif and Huss had striven to give it to the common people, but their efforts had been largely overborne by the opposition with which they were confounded. By the peculiar providence of God, and because the times were ripe, Luther not only survived all the plottings of the enemies of the Truth, but was able to translate and print the Scriptures in the tongue of his people. In addition he was a massive expositor and preacher of what he had discovered. His expositions remain to the present day as magnificent contributions to expository literature. There

is probably no more illuminating commentary extant than his on the Galatians.

Thus the Bible superseded the altar, and the expositor the priest. "No greater change," says Green, the historian, "ever passed over England during the reign of Elizabeth. England became the people of one Book, and that Book the Bible. It was read at churches and read at home, and everywhere its words, as they fell on ears which custom had not deadened, kindled a startling enthusiasm. When Bishop Bunner set up the first six Bibles in St. Paul's, 'many well-disposed persons used much to resort to the hearing thereof, especially when they could get any that had an audible voice to read to them.' But the goodly exercise of readers, such as Porter, was soon superseded by the continual recitation, both of Old Testament and New, in the public services of the Church!" This recitation and exposition has been the glory and strength of an evangelical ministry from that time onwards.

The expositor of the Bible is therefore in the line of a great succession. The Reformers, the Puritans, the pastors of the Pilgrim Fathers were essentially expositors. They did not announce their own particular opinions, which might be matters of private interpretation or doubtful disputation; but, taking their stand on Scripture, drove home their message with irresistible effect with "Thus saith the Lord."

Surely we may go beyond that great age

through the centuries to Augustine and Ambrose, to Chrysostom and Athanasius, always their appeal was to Scripture, and their strength in its systematic unfolding. The sermons of the apostles were little else than quotations and applications of Old Testament Scriptures, and our Lord's own appeals were enforced by citations from the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets.

When the minister is always turning to the Word of God for his authority, when his finger falls naturally on the open page where the proof text awaits his appeal, when each argument is clenched by the endorsement of the Divine Word, he not only places himself on the highest vantage-ground possible, but compels his people to stand before the Supreme Tribunal.

Of course we understand that things are true so far as they are so in the nature of things. Speaking of the ultimate sanctions of right and wrong, we may say that they are to be found in the moral constitution of the universe, which is necessarily what it is; but as the chart reveals the headlands and indentations of the coast, so does the Bible reveal the inexorable demands of God, which were established before the foundations of the earth were laid. Therefore, when the minister buttresses his words on Scripture, and shows that he is warranted in his assertions by the Word of God, he is bringing into court not only the sacred record of the experiences, revelations and meditations of the chosen channels of

the Divine Spirit, but he is summoning the very foundations of the moral universe to affirm that what he says is true. This enables him "to speak with authority, and not as the scribes."

For the most of us it is unwise to enter into detailed defence of the Bible. The familiar humourous story of the verger who said that he had heard all the Bampton lectures and was thankful to be still a believer, suggests that the effect of such sermons on ordinary people is rather in the direction of disturbing than of reassuring them. Probably the Bible is better left to give its own witness to itself. We are not sent to defend the Bible, but to give it utterance, and it will defend itself and its expositor. Your congregations, seeing your deference to the authority of Scripture, will come to honour it as you do. They will regard it as the ultimate appeal, the judge that ends all strife. There is, of course, a gradation in its teachings, from the twilight of the earlier portions to the meridian of the Epistles of John, but it stands for evermore not only as the Illuminator and Comforter of the soul, but as the power-house from which the energy of God is passed into the sermons of the preacher and the resolutions of his congregation.

RESTORED HARMONY—EXPOSITION OF PSALM 19:4

"THEIR line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." (Psalm 19:4.)

This word translated "line" is very interesting. In the first instance it means a measuring-cord, such as is used by an architect for purposes of surveying. Thence it derived the further idea of a cord tightly stretched which gives a musical sound. This is the interpretation taken by the Septuagint, and reproduced by the Apostle Paul when he quotes this verse in Romans 10:18: "Their *sound* went out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." He uses the same word, indeed, in 1 Corinthians 14:7, of the sweet sounds of the pipe and harp. It is held also by an eminent commentator on the Psalter that the word really means *chord* or *key-note;* and this view is supported by Eusebius, who paraphrases the verse thus: "The voices of days and nights, to those who are able to perceive them, shout so loudly that their rehearsal reaches every ear. Accordingly the whole world of human beings is filled with their well-measured, alternate, choral singing." In this regard the heavens maintain for all creation the time and rhythm in the great concert of songs without words; and is not this what the ancients taught, that there is music in the spheres? Addison sings:

> "What though, in solemn silence, all
> Move round this dark terrestrial ball?
> What though no real voice, nor sound,
> Amidst the radiant orbs be found?

"In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
For ever singing as they shine—
The Hand that made us is Divine."

1. The Order and Harmony of Nature. The Eighth Psalm begins with the words, "When I consider thy heavens, the moon and stars;" so, clearly, it was composed under the aspect of night. Here the sun is depicted as a bridegroom emerging from the glowing chambers of the east, which clearly stamps this psalm as having been composed under the aspect of the morning glory. There were three ideas in the psalmist's mind:

(1) *The personality of the Creator.* The azure blue, which to us speaks of infinite depth, to David appeared as a piece of blue tapestry which had been woven on the Divine hand-loom: "The firmament showeth his handiwork." The materialist speaks of the eternity of matter, and argues that Nature contains, locked within herself, the plan and potency of her own existence. The idolator is disposed to believe that the sun and moon and heavenly bodies are deities who determine the lot of human life, and need to be propitiated. But against each of these David put the conviction that the heavens declared the eternal power and Godhead of the Almighty. Comte, the philosopher, ventured to say that the heavens declared the glory of the astronomer, not of God; but, as has been truly said, wherever there is order there must be thought, and wherever there is thought there must be a thinker; and who is that thinker but God? *He* hath not left Himself without witness. His invisible things are clearly seen through the things that are made. Through the solar realms the anointed ear detects a voice saying, "God is; God made us; God is here."

(2) *The silence with which the testimony is given.* The Authorised Version rendering obscures the sense; *e. g.,* "There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard." How incomparably majestic is the original: "There is no speech, there are no words, all inaudible is their voice!" The silent splendour of the midnight sky, of sunrise smiting the Alps, of the Aurora at night, of the noiseless revolutions of the worlds, fill our hearts with awe. The contrast with the hubbub and storm of human life is so absolute, and yet the psalmist says one day "wells over" into the next with speech, and night signals on to night. This blending of speech with silence is the best restorative of the overwrought brain. It is only when we are still as to the physical ear that we can detect the harmonious voice of Nature. Alas for those who will not or dare not expose their souls to these eloquent and silent preachers!

(3) *The energy that thrills through nature.* The sun is depicted as a *strong* man. Modern science has demonstrated the truth of this conception of strength as attributed to the sun. We know that the ultra-violet rays, or actinic rays, contain a virtue, an energy, which is probably the source of all power in the natural world. The coal of the mine, the electricity stored more or less in all substances, the power that drives our factories, locomotive and motors, the life-giving power in all vegetable and animal existence, are all variations of solar energy.

But, after all, the supreme thought suggested by the heavens is *their purity and order.* One looks up into the blue of the mid-day sky, conscious that there at least is perfect purity. There is no discord between them and the Divine nature, no want of harmony in their relations to each other, no stain of impurity or evil. Silently they

have witnessed scenes of outrageous crime upon our earth, but they have not been infected or inflamed. And as we look towards them our hearts condemn us. Here are the ninety and nine that have not gone astray; but woe is unto us that we are people of unclean lips and our dwelling is in a world of uncleanness. For us there is but one confession to the Shepherd of these hosts, who calleth them all by their names, "We have gone astray like lost sheep."

2. **The Order and Harmony of the Moral World.** The psalmist in the second division of this sublime ode turns to the moral world, which underpins the physical, and which fashions the Scriptures. A German writer has said that the two things which struck him with the feeling of the sublime were the starry heavens outside and the moral sense within. Instead of the "moral sense" let us substitute "God's Revealed World," and you have the precise contrast of this psalm.

We cannot stay to notice the affectionate terms in which he refers to it. Six different words are used: "the law," "the testimony," "the precepts," "the commandment," "the fear," and "the judgments" of Jehovah. Note that whereas for the description of the book of Nature he uses the Hebrew EL for the Almighty, in this description of the Scriptures of Truth he employs the name Jehovah, which always describes the Redemptive aspect of the Divine Nature.

We must concentrate our thought on the life which the moral law intends. If we were to obey the impulses and intentions of that silent moral world with the same precision as the worlds obey the motions impressed on them by their Creator, there would result the light, the music, and the order that are so evident in Creation. They are *perfect—i. e.*, without flaw; and if we were

ruled by them, our soul should be "converted"—*i. e.,* established and kept in the original divine ideals. They are *sure—i. e.,* steady, not fitful or intermittent in their effect, communicating infallible wisdom to any soul that will open its windows and doors to receive their radiance. They are *right—i. e.,* they prescribe the true and direct road towards man's goal. They are *pure—i. e.,* they have a radiance like the sun, only of a higher quality than this. They are *clean—i. e.,* absolutely free from the loathsome impurities of the human heart. They are *true and wholly righteous—i. e.,* corresponding to the facts of God and of humanity. They rival the wealth of *gold* and the sweetness of *honey.*

We may paraphrase the words of the psalmist thus: "The Scriptures declare the glory of God, and inspiration shows his handiwork. Book unto book wells over with speech of him, mystery after mystery shows knowledge. There is no speech nor language which the ungodly can hear. Their voice is not heard, yet the music of their speech has gone forth into all the world, and their words to every nation under heaven. In them there is provided a tent for Jesus the Christ, the Sun of Righteousness; and as the clouds of the Eastern sky glow with glory, when the sun emerges from the night to begin the labour of the day, so do the Scriptures glow in every line and verse with the reflected glory of the King of Glory. None are hidden from the heart of his heart, or the love that he hath towards the children of men."

3. **The Disorder and Discord of the Inner World.** What is this that we meet? What is this about errors and secret faults and presumptuous sins and the great transgression? Why does the psalmist appeal to Jehovah as his Rock, and notably as his Redeemer? Let Milton answer:

"Disproportioned sin
Jarred against Nature's chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair music that all creatures made
To their great Lord, whose love their motion swayed."

There are four words here demanding careful thought. *"Who can understand his errors?"* The Hebrew word indicates sins of ignorance or inadvertence; we might call them unsuspected sins. How well I remember, years ago, my first lesson in elocution. Though I had no special conceit of myself, I had no idea how faulty my speech was till my master imitated it. It startled me as much as when first I heard my voice come back from the phonograph. Probably all of us are committing sins daily of which we know nothing. Below our outward action there is a whole world of thoughts, impulses and emotions which we accept as ordinary and human, but would be the first to condemn if we saw them as God does. Traitors are in the camp! White ants are eating out the pith. Gray hairs are on our heads, though we know it not. We are unkempt and ill-dressed because we have shaved and dressed in the dim morning twilight. We are perpetrating habits that are undermining our spiritual health as certain other habits are sapping our physical. We have contracted disease which is at work in our nature, dragging it down imperceptibly, though we wist it not. The Delilah razor is creeping over our locks of strength, though we are unaware. We call vices by euphonious names, as when we call anger "righteous indignation," or passion "a warm nature," or the love of money "a prudent care for our own." David flared up when he heard the story of the rich man who took the poor man's ewe lamb, but had no sort of idea that he was doing the same thing him-

self. If we were to take the poor daub of our character and place it alongside the perfect beauty of Christ, we should have very little to think or say of ourselves thereafter.

Cleanse Thou me from secret faults. We may take those as being the faults which we hide from the eyes which are closest and quickest. A little while ago the papers reported that the cloud by day and fire by night which hovers over Vesuvius has ceased, and that instead invisible vapours, full of poison, arise from the crater. Better the visible than the invisible emission of destructive gases. So secret faults are more perilous than open ones. Dr. Watkinson has told us that elephantiasis may be occasioned by a mosquito bite. The worst diseases to which we are heir begin with infinitesimal bacilli. It is wise in physical health to watch for those secret warnings which portend coming disaster. Hide these, and the full power of some terrible disease will presently assert itself. Are any yielding to secret sins, sins which they dare not speak of, which their dearest would be paralyzed to know of, which they would be the first to judge, and judge harshly in others? Let such emulate the psalmist in his desire to regulate his life in its most secret springs. If you would deal successfully with a child's character, says one, you must begin with its mother's mother. And if you would be kept from a fall which will bring disgrace on your name and family, begin with David's prayer. The oak would never fall before the gale had it not been the prey of the insidious insects which had eaten out its heart.

Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins. The word "presumptuous" literally means that *which boils and bubbles.* This is a befitting term for the sins into which we are hurried by the agitation of excited im-

pulses and passions in spite of the remonstrances of our conscience. They are sins that the doer, when he does them, knows to be wrong. Do we not all recall moments when we knew that a certain deed was wrong, but we have set our teeth to do it, and have done it? Now, of course, such sins may so frighten us that to have committed them once will set us against them for ever. David's agony over his sin with Bathsheba, like a prairie fire, burnt his heart bare, and no similar act could find aught to feed upon. And a man's sin may prove his salvation, but it is not always so. Presumptuous sins may get dominion over us. The physiologist tells us that the repetition of the same action for but a few times deeply affects the particles, tissues, and nerves of the body, establishing a strong tendency in the same direction. The track, once trodden, becomes more and more a path. The rill that trickles through the dyke will become the flood. The weed which is but a single plant to-day will become a mass of floating vegetation to-morrow. One pair of gray squirrels filled Regent's Park with that species and drove out all the little brown ones that had held undisputed sway. "Look, therefore, carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise." The collier who descends the pit and walks through the long galleries, guarding his lamp, has our profound sympathy; but what shall we say of him when he opens his lamp to light his pipe! Alfred Nobel, the great inventor of explosives, faced the most tremendous perils in carrying out his experiments. On one occasion he crept up to a large cask of dynamite and cut out an explosive in the very nick of time. But how different such an attitude to the presumptuousness of the fools that would play with nitro-glycerine. This world of ours is by no means *fool-proof*, and we need to ask daily that we may not be

led into temptation or may enter the fire with our powder saturated with moisture.

So only shall we be preserved from *great transgression.* This means rebellion and revolt. Here is the result of tampering with temptation, that there is an entire casting off of all allegiance to God. This is the terrible sequel. He who toyed with evil becomes mastered by evil. "His servants ye are whom ye obey." The secret obedience of the traitorous heart to the enemy of our Master prepares the way for His enthronement and crowning. First, unsuspected sin, unsuspected through unwatchfulness; then secret sin, known to the soul, but hidden from others; then presumptuous sin, impetuous and barefaced; lastly, the great transgression, when the soul disowns God. "Lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin; and sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death."

See, then, what has happened. Yonder is the Order and Beauty of the Physical World; within is the Order and Beauty of the Moral World. But now we are face to face with the Disorder and Discord of the Inner World of Man Soul. What can be done? Man cannot right himself. The forces of evil are too strong, because generations of evildoers lie behind us. What, then, shall we do? To whom can we turn? To none save to our God. He is our *Rock,* the eternal ground of all Being, of all Truth and Right and Holiness; but He is also our *Redeemer,* our God, having tender pity for our fallen and sorrowful state.

Rock stands for strength, and we need strength. Redeemer means love, and we need love. Both are blended in Jesus Christ. Here is that of which Creation and the Moral Law cannot speak. In them there is apparently nothing but Law, swift to smite, merciless and un-

sparing. But the missal of Gethsemane, Calvary, the open grave, declare the glory and handiwork of God as neither of the other books could do. Is there no speech, no language from those mute wounds, more eloquent than all the speech of suns and worlds?

But what will He do? First, He clears from guilt; and next He keeps back from presumptuous sin by the saving strength of His right hand; and next He brings us into At-one-ment with God, and so into accord with the fair music that all creatures make to their great Lord.

THE EXAMPLE OF OUR LORD

CHAPTER FOUR

IV

THE EXAMPLE OF OUR LORD —HIS REVERENCE FOR AND USE OF SCRIPTURE

Our Lord's attitude towards Scripture is really suggestive. His own life-course was determined by it. Not only at the great crises, but in smaller matters and minute details He was ruled by it. He affirmed that His reading of parables, His going up to Jerusalem, His working of miracles, betrayal of Judas, seizure of the Jews, violent death, and victorious resurrection were all in accordance with Scripture. He found these and many minute points beside recorded on its pages. It was clear to Him that His whole career had been set down by the Divine Spirit in cypher on those sacred pages, with which He was so intimately familiar. He was guided in the jots and tittles of His life and ministry by His Father's will as it was expressed through Scripture and mapped out there.

When the disciples asked the reason of His clothing His teaching in those picture stories, which have enriched the thought and speech of men in every page, He told them that it was to fulfil what had been spoken of the Prophet (Matt. 13:13-15, 34, 35; John 12:38, 39). When He was bearing the griefs and sorrows of mankind

He found His justification again in Isaiah's words (Matt. 8:16, 17). The wonder at His frequently repeated cautions that the healed should not make Him known was met by reference to Scripture predictions (Matt. 12:15-21). His triumphal entrance into Jerusalem was justified by the requirements of ancient prophecy. Many of the pathetic details of His last hours were, in a most literal and significant sense, the fulfillment of Scripture. The crowning with thorns, the scourging, the piercing of hands, feet and side, the vinegar, the mockery, the unbroken bones, the parted raiment, the broken heart, the burial in the rich man's sepulchre, the very words He used on the cross, all prove, in affecting detail, how saturated His soul was with Scripture, and how minutely He fulfilled it in countless particulars. From the beginning of His public ministry, when He repelled Satan by the thrice, *"It is written,"* to the close, when He taught His disciples in all the Scriptures, *"the things concerning himself,"*—the Word of God was His rod and His staff.

It has been truly said that no disciples of Browning or Tennyson, Milton or Shakespeare, Goethe or Dante, Virgil or Homer, were ever so saturated with their master's thoughts or so steeped in their spirit as Jesus was with Scripture. He discovered unexpected truths in it, revealed Divine depths, disclosed hidden meanings, made unthought-of applications—unforeseen by the writers and unperceived by the readers. It

was its sustenance of His own soul's life and the nourishment of His spiritual nature. His human character developed along its lines, whilst His moral and spiritual being was perfected by its indwelling up to the full stature of His glorious manhood. He performed His life-work under its inspiration, defended Himself by its examples, resisted His temptations in its strength, sustained His soul by its comfort, died with its blessed words upon His lips. To Him it was the true and faithful Word of God, which could not be broken, but was the foundation and pillar of truth. So we may readily suppose, therefore, He was *The Prince of Expositors.* We are told that "He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

One notable example of this occurred at Nazareth. He had passed, on the way to the synagogue from Mary's house, many a bent and aged elder whom He had known strong and stalwart years before. Many a voice He recognized in the clear sunny air as belonging to a girl or boy of His happy boyhood's memories. The well-remembered little meeting-place was crowded by the friends and families of His early years. The ancient Levite, who may have been the first to unfold to Him the sacred mysteries of Scripture, may have been the minister of the sanctuary who handed to Him the sacred scroll and motioned Him to read. Mary was there behind the screen that hid the women from gaze, and His brother

sat in the audience. What should be His subject on that memorable day, when beneath the pressure of the great tides that were pulsing through His spirit He stood up before the expectant audience? He turned to the lesson of the day, to the next in the course, and proceeded to expound Isaiah 60:1-3.

We cannot found an argument upon this single act, but it is at least significant that the Lord gave His sanction to the systematic reading and consideration of the inspired Word in His earliest sermon.

Our Lord was also careful to consider the text in relation to the context and the whole tenor and teaching of Scripture. The habit of taking a little snippet of a verse from any part of the Bible and making it the subject of discourse, exposes the preacher to the danger of an unbalanced statement of truth, which is very prejudicial. Nothing is more perilous than the partial knowledge of God's truth, which is based on sentences torn from their rock-bed and viewed in isolation from their setting.

When Satan was met by our Lord's use of Scripture, he also quoted Scripture to his purpose, saying, "It is written that he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." But there was a touch almost of sternness in our Lord's reply, "It is written *again,* Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." "What is the meaning of that?"

asks Dr. Parker. It is that the Bible is not made to be of one text. The meaning is that you must compare Scripture with Scripture. It is possible to fasten the mind upon a single line, so as to miss the whole revelation of the Bible. We have to compare spiritual things with spiritual. It is written here, and it is written again; and the one passage must be read in the light of the other. You must have the whole Bible, and not an isolated text, to rest upon. There is a Biblical spirit as well as a Biblical letter.

Surely this Biblical spirit is more certainly imbibed, and the whole tenor of truth more certainly embraced, when a congregation is led consecutively through some noble argument like that of the Romans, or a series of ascents like those of the Hebrews, than would be possible if isolated topics were selected, apparently at haphazard.

Our Lord always associated the Scriptures with the energy of Divine power. During the last week of His earthly ministry He was confronted by a series of questions carefully prepared to entrap Him. "There came unto him Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection: and they asked him," etc. (Mark 12:19, etc.).

Our Lord introduced His reply by the startling announcement that they erred greatly because "they knew not the Scriptures, nor the power of God." They were not prepared to suppose that there was anything in the Hebrew Scriptures with

which they were not already perfectly familiar. It was a novel experience to be taught by one who had not passed through their schools, and to find Him connecting in this wonderful manner the Scriptures and the power of God.

Three things are worthy of notice: (1) Our Lord did not appeal, as Plato might have done, to arguments for the other life, based on the nature of the soul or the processes of nature, but to the Scriptures, which were ever His ultimate court of appeal. In His conflict with Satan and in His teachings His supreme appeal was always to the Word of God. (2) He discovered an argument for the future life in the present tense, as Jehovah used it, in His first conference with Moses. In this He shows His reverence for the very letter of the Word of God, and reminds us of Paul the Apostle, who founds an argument on the presence or absence of a single letter (Gal. 3:16).

We should never have dreamed of the fathomless depths that underlie those simple words, "*I am,*" unless He had taken us by the hand and bade us look into their profundity, blue with distance. It was argument enough for our Lord that two hundred and fifty or three hundred years after the death of the youngest patriarch God described Himself as being the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and from these words He, as man, arrived at the assurance and was warranted to affirm that all these souls must be in existence somewhere, since God could not be God of the

dead, but of the living. If God could still assert Himself as the God of Jacob two and a half centuries after he had been laid to sleep in Machpelah's ancient cave, then Jacob must still be alive! What light this casts on the possibilities that sleep under the simplest texts! We pass and repass over them, like the prone gravestones of an old churchyard, which have become a well-worn pathway to hurrying feet, but we cannot exhaust the depths that lie under. From this instance, however, we may infer the mysteries of wonder and beauty that our Lord must have unfolded to His disciples during the forty days, when, as we have seen, He expounded to them in *all* the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Why did our Lord so significantly combine the Scriptures with the power of God? If we can ascertain what the Scriptures are we may arrive somewhat nearer the truth. Perhaps we cannot put the matter better than in the words of Dr. Gordon, "Literature is the letter, Scripture is the letter inspired of the Spirit." What our Lord said of the New Birth is equally applicable to the doctrine of inspiration, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

You may educate, develop and refine the natural man to the highest possible point, but he does not become a spiritual man till, through the new birth, the Holy Spirit renews and dwells in him, energizes and strengthens him with all might in

the inner man. So of literature; however elevated its tone, lofty its thought, eloquent its expression, it is not Scripture, because it is not, in any special sense, the organ and weapon of the Divine Spirit. The absence of the quickening energy and vitalizing power of the Holy Spirit from any writing constitutes an impassable gulf between it and Scripture. In short, the one fact which makes the Word of God a unique book, standing in solitary separateness from other writings, is that which also parts the man of God from common men—the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

We must not speak of Scripture as having been once inspired of the Spirit of God, as though it were not so now, but as still being inspired. The bush burns with fire. The voice of God speaks in it. The Word gives living force to the words. The words are, as our Lord affirmed, both Spirit and life. As the sun burns in our furnaces, its heat having been for millenniums bottled up in the coal, which has been described as fossilized sunlight; so the Holy Spirit is present in Scripture as in no other writing under heaven. Our Lord's perception of this made the Scripture His constant meditation and final court of appeal. And in proportion as we use them, enforcing and applying, we also shall discover that to a superexcellent degree they contain not only oracles, but the power of God.

Even the words of Scripture are not unimportant. We may go too far in the further ex-

treme from the doctrine of verbal dictation. If they were not dictated, they have at least answered to the Divine thought as the coin to the die; and we are not at liberty to alter the language without imperilling the thought. The expositor, therefore, may be excused if he should linger lovingly over the very words of the paragraph which he is unfolding. Many of them are so apt, so picturesque, so laden with suggestiveness that they well deserve to be held up to an audience as the connoisseur will hold up precious stones, dilating and expatiating on their beauty.

Whatever God has promised in Scripture He is prepared to make good by His power. Not only is there power *in* the Word, but *with it*. We must know the Scriptures *and* the power of God. In the proper balancing of these two—in the study of Scripture on the one hand, and in the adoring contemplation of God's power on the other—we shall find our best preservative against the errors of our age; and so we may await the hour when God will vindicate Himself. "What he has promised he is able also to perform."

Not the Scriptures without the Power, or you will arrive at the dry-as-dust pedantries of Pharisee and scribe. Not the Power without the Scriptures, or you will drift into the ineptitudes of mysticism and fanaticism. Always combine the Scriptures and the Power of the living God, and you will establish the inspiration of Scriptures for all thoughtful hearers and readers, because they will

become aware of a Divine energy working with them and through them, as by no other medium known amongst men.

Our Lord's profound reverence and love for the Scripture should make every minister desire that during his pastorate he should succeed in leading his people to a well-balanced and intimate acquaintance with the entire range of the Word of God, that they may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. If he is not able to expound every book, as Dr. Parker did, he should see to it that his people have a thorough knowledge of some, and a competent knowledge of all.

When I commenced my fifteen years' pastorate at Christ Church, I began with the Old Testament in the morning and the New Testament in the evening, and went systematically on from Genesis 1 in the one case and Matthew 1 in the other. I had not completed either course, but had advanced through two-thirds in each case.

This systematic exposition of the Scripture places the Bible where our Lord put it, in the supreme place; and, though the inspiration of the Epistles of John is different and deeper than of Judges or Samuel, yet all Scripture, given by the inbreathing of the Divine Spirit, is profitable. The late Dr. W. Robertson Smith left this conclusion on record, which his scholarship and fidelity to truth make extremely valuable: "So long as we go to Scripture, only to find in it God and His redeeming love mirrored before the eyes

of faith, we may rest assured that we shall find living, self-evidencing, infallible truth in every part of it, and that we shall find nothing else."

THE EIGHT GATES INTO THE CITY OF BLESSEDNESS—AN EXPOSITION OF THE BEATITUDES

There is a condition of soul which may be experienced and enjoyed by every child of our race, which the Master calls Blessedness. He uses the same word to describe it as is employed to set forth the Being of God and the life of the saints who have passed beyond the veil.

"Blessed are ye" (Matt. 5:11); "The glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1 Tim. 1:11); "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord" (Rev. 14:13). This condition of soul, however, need not be postponed until we, too, in our turn, pass the Gate of the City and find ourselves amid "the solemn troops and sweet societies" of eternity. It may be entered here and now. The fragrance of this garden steals through the crowded and noisy cities of our modern civilization like the morning air laden with the scent of new-mown grass. The gates of this city stand open night and day for lonely souls in country and sequestered places, where the noise of the city-life cannot reach; and at any moment they may tread its thronged streets, listen to its murmured speech, and join in its vast convocations, of which it is written: "Ye are come to Mount Sion, the City of the Living God, to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born."

Blessedness does not depend on outward possessions,

such as worldly goods, or lands, or high birth, or erudite culture. Indeed, there are words of Christ which suggest that they who stand possessed of these things will find it harder to enter that Paradise which has not yet faded from our world, and to pass through the gates of that city which are before our eyes, if only they were opened to discern them. When he repeated this sermon of the mountain heights and of the dawn to the multitudes that stood breathless beneath its spell, He said: "Woe unto you that are rich. . . . Woe unto you that are full. . . . Woe unto you, ye that laugh." He did not mean that such would be necessarily excluded, but that entrance into blessedness would be harder for them; as when, after dusk, a camel strives to get through the needle-eye gate placed in the city wall for belated pedestrians.

There is no soul of man so illiterate, so lonely, so poor in this world's goods, so beset with hereditary sins and demoniacal temptations, that may not at this moment step suddenly into this life of blessedness, begin to drink of the river which makes glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. It is not necessary to ascend into heaven to bring it down, or to descend into the depth of the abyss to bring it up; it has not to be wrestled or wept for; it is not to be obtained by the merit of holy deeds or as the guerdon of devoted service; it is not a reward which comes after long years in the council chamber or on the tented field. We have not to do or feel or suffer, but only to be, to cultivate certain dispositions, to possess a nature, here carefully defined—and instantly blessedness begins, an unearthly light breaks on the soul, which is destined to increase into the full radiance of heaven's high noon. "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord" (can you not hear

the angel voices?); "Wherefore standest thou without?"

Our Master did not speak of this condition of soul by hearsay; for thirty years it had been His sweet and deep experience. During His life in Nazareth, had not the Lamb of God lain in His Father's bosom? Had He not realized that He was wrapped around with the love which had been His before the worlds were made? Had He not been content to let the great ones of the world go on their way of pomp and pride because He was assured of a deeper joy, a more perfect peace, a more satisfying happiness than Cæsar's smile or the imperial purple could afford? The well of water was springing up in His own pure heart before He spoke of it to the woman at Sychar's well. He knew the Father, loved the Father, fulfilled the Father's behests, rested in the Father's will, was encompassed with the perpetual sense of the Father's presence, breathed the sunny air of the Father's love. During His earthly life, as He confessed Himself, the Son of man was, therefore, already "in heaven" (John 3:13). He offers us what He was experiencing for Himself. "My peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you." "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you." "That the love wherewith thou lovest me may be in them."

Not to the same degree, but after the same quality and kind, we may know in this life, amid difficult, tempestuous and sorrowful experiences, what the Lord felt when He said, "He that sent me is with me; the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things which please him."

The ingredients of this experience are enumerated thus: First, it is blessed *to belong to that invisible Kingdom* which is already in our world, including within its

ever-expanding circle all gracious souls of every race and age, breathing the ozone of heaven into the stale and exhausted atmosphere of the world; its King, the Enthroned Lamb; its subjects, the childlike, the forgiving, the gentle, and the pure; its laws, love; its advances, so soft, sweet, irresistible as the dawn; its duration, eternal. It is a blessed thing to know that one has the franchise and freedom of that Kingdom, that one need never go out from its holy and strong embrace, and that men like John the Divine may greet us thus: "Your brother and partaker with you . . . in the Kingdom . . . which is in Jesus." (Rev. 1:9, R. V.)

Second, it is blessed to be comforted with the *comfort which only God can give.* When the eyes are wet with tears that refuse to be staunched, to feel a hand soft and strong wiping them away, and to discover that it is the Hand

> That can ruffle an evening calm,
> And bears Calvary's mark on its pierced palm;

when the face is buried amid the dried flowers and leaves of departed joys, to hear a whisper which thrills the sense, growing fuller and clearer, like a flute, and to detect in its syllables the assurances of the Comforter Himself; when the sepulchre seems to hold all that made life worth living, to become suddenly aware that there is a Presence near at hand, and to find that the Gardener Himself is at hand to lift the drooping plant of life, unfurling its petals again to the light; to be strong in God's strength, comforted with the paracletism of the Paraclete, to drink of the brook by the way—here is blessedness which eye hath not seen, neither the ear of ordinary man heard, nor the unregenerate heart perceived. Even the bereaved and lonely heart, sitting amid

the wreckage of all its joys and hopes, may be aware of this.

Third, it is blessed *to inherit the earth.* When that condition of soul is reached of which the Master is speaking,

> Heaven above is softer blue,
> Earth around is sweeter green;
> Something shines in every hue
> Christless eyes have never seen.

There is a new rapture in common sights, a new meaning in common sounds; lilies are robed more gloriously than Solomon; the winged and furred denizens of the woodlands become, as St. Francis found them, "little brothers and sisters." As Cowper said, such a man may be poor compared with those whose mansions glitter in his sight, but he calls the luxuriant prospect all his own. Every wind wafts him blessing; all things work together for his good. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come—all things bring their tribute to the man who has learned Christ's secret, which, like the fabled philosopher's stone, turns everything to gold. What inheriting the earth means is shown in the words of one of Christ's most proficient pupils when he said, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." You may own vast estates, and get nothing from them. You may have no rod or perch of land, and yet you may derive joy and delight from every scene, and extract nutriment from every incident. Newspapers, public events, journals, travels, pictures, architecture, literature, human life—all shall minister to your joys and perfecting.

Fourth, it is blessed *to be filled.* In this life as well

as in the next it is possible to hunger no more, neither thirst any more. Not to hunger for the husks that the swine eat, because filled with the provisions of the Father's table! Not to thirst for the heated pools at which the children of the world seek to quench their thirst, because the well of water that springs up to eternal life is within. Not to clamour for the fleshpots of Egypt, because there is so plentiful a provision of manna. Oh, it is a blessed thing to be filled with the Spirit, to be full of joy and peace, to be filled with God's grace and heavenly benediction, to be filled with the fruits of righteousness, to be filled with the knowledge of His will, to be filled unto the fulness of God! Tennyson says that the babble of the Wye among the hills lasts until the tidal wave fills up its channels to the brim; and the heart is restless till it is full—but when it has realized this blessed fulness, dipped deep into the fulness of God, and lifted out dripping with flashing drops, ah, then evil has no lure to charm, the fear of man cannot intrude, the fascination and blandishments of sense are neutralized. What more can the soul want than to be filled with Thee, O God, who didst make us for Thyself? Cannot a flower be satisfied which has a sun to shine on it, and a glacier-fed river to wash its roots?

Fifth, it is blessed *to be the recipient of mercy.* There is never a moment of our life in which we do not stand in need of mercy, both at the hands of our fellows and, above all, from the hand of God. There is no saint in the heavenly Kingdom who does not, at some time or other, need to appropriate the petitions of the man after God's own heart and say, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies." We need mercy from little children startled by our harsh tones; mercy

from our servants and employees hindered by our inconsistencies, our quick temper and imperious tones; mercy from husband or wife, brother or sister, neighbour or friend; above all, mercy from the Most Merciful; and it is blessed to know that we have it in heaven's own measure, full, pressed down, and running over. So far from making us lax in permitting sin, it predisposes us to more mercy toward the failings of others, more mercilessness to ourselves.

Sixth, it is blessed *to have the vision of God.* Not to terrify, as when Moses hid his face, and Elijah went into the covert of the cave, and John fell at His feet as dead; but more after the fashion of Mr. Hewitson's experience, when he says: "Our Redeemer is no mere abstraction, no ideality that has its being only in our shifting thoughts. He is the most personal of all persons, the most living of all who live. He is 'the First and the Last, and the living One.' He is so near us, as the Son of God, that we can feel His warm breath on our souls; and as the Son of man He has a heart like these hearts of ours—a human heart, meek and lowly, tender, kind, and sympathising. In the Word—the almost *viva voce* utterance of Himself—His arm of power is stretched forth beside you, that you may lean on it with all your weight; and in the Word, also, His love is revealed, that on the bosom of it you may lay your aching head and forget your sorrow in the abundance of His consolation. To the Living One who died we must look, that we may be weaned and won over to God, that we may be strengthened, spiritualized, and sanctified." Who would not desire a life like this, in which God should be the one dear Presence, the one familiar and everpresent Object of thought, the Friend with whom an increasing dialogue is maintained? A

young girl employed in a shop told me that her consciousness of God and her converse with Him had now lasted for three years, and that difficult things had become easy, as though He arranged all and smoothed out the creases.

Seventh, it is blessed *to be recognised as the son of God.* Some are undoubtedly children of God who are not like God. It would require a good deal of scrutiny to detect His image and superscription on their faces, or the tones of His voice in their speech. The manners of the heavenly court are not evident in their demeanor; the courtesy and thoughtfulness that characterised the Son of man are not characteristic of their behaviour to the poor and timid, to little children and helpless women. They too often break the bruised reed and quench the smoking flax; they strive and cry, and cause their voice to be heard in the street; they do not bear, believe, hope, and endure all things, or elicit the love of men to Him, whose name and nature they ought to bear in every lineament. Be it ours to be imitators of God as dear children, to be harmless and blameless, the sons of God, without rebuke—to be thus is to be blessed.

Eighth, *we come back to the Kingdom of heaven.* For blessedness is like a spiral staircase: we are always coming back to the same standpoint from a higher position on the circling round. When we begin to live for God we find ourselves in the Kingdom, and are ravished with the beauty of the dawn; but after years have been spent in doing His will and walking in His fellowship, there is a new depth of loveliness and significance in its infinite and divine contents.

O Christ, Thou King of Glory, uplift us above the common dusty road of mortal life; lift us into Thy life, above the heads of our enemies, above the weight of our flesh, above the glamour of the world, and make us most blessed for ever, and glad with joy in Thy presence!

THE EXPOSITOR AT WORK

CHAPTER FIVE

V

THE EXPOSITOR AT WORK

The benefit of the Expository Method to the preacher is immense. In the first place it saves him from the search for a subject or text, which is sometimes extremely tiresome and wasteful of his time. There are times when for hours nothing bites. The mind cannot settle. It visits flower after flower without extracting a drop of honey. But there is small danger of this when Exposition is the preacher's rule.

Probably on Sunday night, when the family has dispersed, he will take his Bible in hand and turn to the paragraph next in order to that from which he has preached during the day. The emotions that have wrought within his soul have not died down. The sea still heaves with mighty billows. If his sermons have failed, he sees where and why, and girds himself with desire to lay emphasis on the neglected truth; or if his sermons have succeeded, he is desirous of carrying forward the impression to further results. He can see his congregation still facing him, or can feel them tugging hard at his heart and brain. The reaction has not set in. The glow of the day still lingers on the mountain peak, and he is standing there, though he realizes already that to-morrow he may

be still descending into the valley beneath. This is the hour when, with the light of the Holy Spirit illumining the printed page and his soul, he cons the paragraph next in order, until probably its salient features, its lesson, or its pivotal sentence grips him.

He has his scrap of writing paper at hand and makes a few rough notes. There is yet no coherency or connection between those fragmentary jottings. In jumbling disorder they have tumbled from his hand, and lie there in confusion. A word, an anecdote, a reference to some recent reading; they are there as the hues of a gorgeous sunset, caught by a lover of nature's most radiant hours, may lie hidden under the jottings of his notebook.

Nothing more need be attempted that night. Let the tired brain have rest as soon as sleep will come, the subconscious soul may be left to elaborate upon its new-found theme. The ferment will begin to grow in its profound depths, as yeast in flour. Only let the preacher keep that paper handy, that he may fix on it the fugitive thoughts, with footstep light as a fairy's, that may flit across the surface of the soul. They must be instantly snapshotted and fixed. The resolve to recall them will fail. It is almost impossible to recover the first fair form in which a thought visits you, unless it is instantly transfixed by the pen.

As the week begins to wane the preacher will take an hour or two to develop his theme. First

he investigates the original Hebrew or Greek. Happy man if he has each within easy call. It is the writer's great regret that he ever allowed his Hebrew to get rusty; and he cannot be thankful enough to have kept his Greek in good and ready use. Though it is true that the results of expert learning in each language are within reach in some form or other for English readers; yet there is a peculiar freshness of interest in interrogating the very language employed by an Isaiah or a Paul until, like the carcass of Samson's lion, it yields meat and sweetness. We have no right to put fancy interpretations on the sacred writings. There is plenty of good metal within their content for those who will seek it. It is always better to mine into it than to bring extraneous matter to it or travel from it. Even an allegorical use of Scripture is to be made with caution. We must not convey the notion to our hearers or readers that the Bible, of all books, is to be taken in a non-natural sense, or that it cannot be understood and interpreted by the plain man who goes to it with a pure heart and an intelligent mind. The far-fetched lessons and instruction which some men delight in extorting from the Bible are the despair of wayfaring souls, who walk in the broad thoroughfares of Scripture, unable to make these excursions into realms of fancy or imagination.

Not only does the expositor ascertain the exact meaning of the text, but he considers it in the

light of the entire book. One of the greatest expositors of our time tells us that he will read a given book, which he has set himself to expound, some ten or twenty times through, that he may catch the spirit of the author and become steeped in his ruling motive and purpose. Every book in the Bible was written to effect some purpose, and it is only by steadfast attention that the modern mind can be apprehended and possessed by that purpose. Just as the first glimpse at a noble picture or the first hearing of superb music is insufficient to acquaint one with the author's entire conception or to show the harmony of the details with its main outline, so a piecemeal reading of any book of the Bible will fail to possess the soul with its full harmony and glory. It is not enough to read about the Bible, we must read the Bible itself. It is as necessary to be familiar with the atmosphere of the book you are expounding as for a painter to be acquainted with the profession and interests of a man before he attempts to portray him. The first aim should be to know what the original text exactly meant; the next is to place it in the perspective of the entire book. Who can understand the mind of the Roman Forum, who is not acquainted with Roman history? Each author of the Bible books is a highly developed personality, as much so as Mozart or Beethoven, as Milton or Shakespeare, and needs, therefore, special understanding and handling.

After we have got so far, we naturally turn to commentaries and sermons, that they may throw further light on our subject. The method adopted by Mr. Spurgeon was, I believe, as follows: On Saturday evening at 6 P. M. he would retire from the sitting-room, in which he had been entertaining his guests with his wise and witty talk, announce his text to his secretary, who would open all commentaries and treatises bearing upon it, arranging them around his library on little ledges provided for the purpose. The great preacher would pass from one to another, note-book in hand, jotting down any characteristic or fresh view or side-light, and in this manner availed himself of a great variety of material which, becoming assimilated in his own mind, was reproduced in his own style. This is a great model. We must not appropriate a man's expression of thought—this is his own—but thoughts, so far as we appropriate them, and allow them to grow in the soil of our own mind, and reproduce themselves after their kind, become ours. We are free to use all truth which has germinated in ourselves and drawn on the resources of our soul. It is in this sense that commentators serve us—they set us thinking.

It is, of course, most unwise for a preacher to trouble his hearers with the successive steps which have led up to the conclusions which he announces. Still less is he justified to set before his congregation a number of varying conclusions,

leaving them to select the one that seems nearest the truth. He ought to have settled all this for himself and for them long before. It is his business to weigh up the worth of the various readings, arguments and suggestions with which the books of reference teem, and after he has winnowed away extraneous matter, to present the conclusions to which he has come in a form that his hearers can readily assimilate. We do not need to be informed of the various processes through which the wheat passes, and to be instructed as to the different varieties of wheat before partaking of our morning meal. We pay others, who are experts, to do this for us, placing at our disposal the knowledge gained through study, training and experience.

There are five considerations that must be met in every successful sermon. There should be an appeal to the Reason, to the Conscience, to the Imagination, to the Emotions, and to the Will; and for each of these there is no method so serviceable as systematic exposition.

The Reason. "Come, let us reason together," is God's own appeal to the soul. There are many things in religion which we should not have been able to reason out for ourselves, but which we can apprehend and accept when once they are revealed; but there is nothing to contradict our reason. It may be confidently affirmed that God does not require of us to accept anything which is clearly unreasonable. He who gave us the eye

of the body has contrived to adapt the light to it, and it to the light. Reason is the eye of the soul, and what light is to the eye, that truth is to the mind. Our Lord is the King of Truth, and His appeal is always to those who are *of* the truth. "He that is of the truth heareth my voice."

After the preacher has stated the main thesis of his sermon, there should be a little time spent in showing that it is consistent with reason. It may be above reason, but it is not contrary to reason. Our reason is founded on two great faculties of our nature, the logical and the intuitive. The logical is the faculty of advancing from certain premises to the conclusion; the intuitive, which is largely the storehouse of racial experience, does not argue, but perceives. There is the flash of recognition as of something which needs no train of argument, because it is self-evident. It is most important that by one or other of these two processes the reason should be led to give its assent to the main theme of the discourse. By manifestation of the truth we must obtain the verdict of the inner court or tribunal. The speeches of great orators and preachers generally excel in the lucidity of their presentation of their valid claim to the assent and consent of the reason.

The preacher who bases his sermon on a paragraph rather than a text is, on the whole, more likely to discover the grounds of this appeal to reason. The prophets, for instance, are greatly

given to arguments borrowed from nature, as in Isaiah 40, or from the futility and unreasonableness of idol worship, as in Isaiah 44. The Epistles of Paul bristle with arguments addressed to the logical faculty, and those of John with appeals based on the intuitive. The discourse, then, which rests on a careful exegesis of a tract of Scripture resembles those mighty mountains or oaks whose roots and spurs go far afield, mooring them in immovable majesty in the earth.

The Conscience. We are told in the majestic prologue to the Fourth Gospel that in every man there is a beam of the light which shone in the character and ministry of our Lord and which is divine. That sense of right and wrong, that instant appreciation of rightness and wrongness which is the property of each moral being. When the question arises whether such and such a course is wise or unwise, expedient or inexpedient, conscience is silent, though it listens attentively to the debate; but so soon as the question is introduced whether a matter is right or wrong, conscience puts all other speakers aside and silences every other voice, and utters a verdict against which there can be no dispute. It is final and irrefutable. It cannot be argued with or cajoled. It is a miniature of the Great White Throne reflected in the mirror of the soul.

Conscience is the minister's main ally. As Blondin, the minstrel, discovered the imprisoned King of England, entrapped on his way home

from the Crusades, and incarcerated in an obscure castle in Austria, by playing beneath his prison windows a lay which only they two knew, so the preacher plays under the windows of the soul the external truths of revelation, certain of eliciting a favorable response. Deep down in the human soul there is an ally, an accomplice, a confederate, who joins his forceful voice, which cannot be gagged or silenced, with the voice of truth, so that in the mouth of two witnesses every word is established.

But again the expositor stands a better chance of awakening this response than the topical preacher, because there is necessarily more of Scriptural statement in his sermons. His preaching is the concentrated essence of Scripture. It might be called Bibline. The Spirit of truth finds a larger amount of that sword which He is accustomed to wield, and of those arrows, which have always proved themselves to be sharp in the heart of the King's enemies.

The Imagination. In every sermon there should be a stained-glass window, through which the light should enter, dyed and saturated with the glow of colour. Some minds are naturally imaginative and poetic. They love the pure white marble better when it is bathed with the rainbow hues of the noble eastern window. The gateway through which truth comes to them is made of pearls saturated in a very phantasmagoria of splendour. They cannot be comforted unless their

stones are laid with fair colours, and their foundations with sapphires. Their windows must be of agates and their borders of precious stones. There ought to be a dash of colour in every sermon. The children will listen for it and recognise the happy moment; and people with vagrant fancies will find these winging their way back when the preacher turns off the moorland into the gardens gay with bloom and filled with the hum of bees.

It was to win such that our Lord so often said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like . . ." For these also the Song of Solomon was placed in the Old Testament and the Apocalypse in the New. For them also there are here and there suggestions and things which eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard.

But the expositor who bends over each word and clause of his paragraph, endeavouring to penetrate to the heart, as a road-mender will go on his knees to break open the granite blocks heaped beside him, is more likely to find materials on which the imagination may feed. The imagination must be called into play to reconstruct the historic past, to reproduce the characters and lives of those who compose the dramas of the Sacred Book, to rebuild before the modern world the stage on which redemption was wrought. The preacher-expositor clothes the persons of the period with which he is dealing in the costumes of their times, and makes them speak and act as

they must have done in those far-away days. It is when his picture is complete, and his audience is absorbed in watching the development of the plot that he suddenly drops the style of the narrator and comes to close quarters with the dagger-thrust of "Thou art the man."

The Emotions. We must not forget these. Some can only be approached through the tears that wet the cheek and the sorrow or joy that moves the heart. You must call up the past, you must touch the chords that respond to the zephyr breath of tender and sacred memories, you must awaken sensibility, you must melt the arctic ice and snow which have gathered over the green pastures of the soul. In each sermon there should be some touch of that nature which makes the whole world kin.

But where can such materials for these appeals be obtained so readily as in the great old stories of Scripture? Is there anything in literature more moving than Judah's appeal for Benjamin before the Egyptian Prime Minister, his brother, though he did not recognise him? Is there anything more pathetic than the appeals to the backsliding, based on Hosea's trampled home and his desolate heart? Can words find anywhere more piteous language than the lamentations of Jeremiah? Is any scene more likely to strike rivers of waters from rocks than the story of the crucifixion or of Peter's denial? With Shakespeare, the preacher may constantly be led to

exclaim, as he comes to these and similar paragraphs in the course of his exposition,

"Ye that have tears, prepare to shed them now."

And who can complain when the minister comes on such scenes, not because of his arbitrary selection, but because they come in the ordinary course of exposition. He can hardly be characterised as "a weeping preacher" who again and again in the course of his ministry arrives at valleys of weeping, where the rains fill the pools.

The Will. But the end of all preaching is to obtain the assent of the will. We are not what we think or feel or imagine, but what we *will.* The will is the keeper of the citadel. It is our innermost self. Until that yields, nothing is yielded. Until that is surrendered, nothing is really gained. If ministers would recognise this, how much more permanent the results of their ministry would become. The will is like the alpenstock, which the climber drives into the ice-block above him, and to which he presently drags up the rest of his body.

But, again, the expositor is in a better position than all others in his chance of capturing and compelling the will. He has a wider range of truth on which to base his appeals. In that one paragraph there will probably be contained the materials for access to the inner shrine from each of the gates of the soul. Like the New Jerusalem, the soul has twelve gates, some of which are al-

ways open, if not all. He hardly can fail who attempts them all, and is more likely to succeed than if he marched up one avenue alone. "Blessed are they who sow beside *all* waters."

THE INTENTION OF THE SOUL—EXPOSITION OF MATTHEW 6:22

The eye is the most striking and important feature of the face. Blue as the azure of heaven, brown as hazel, black as jet, it gives expression and beauty to the countenance, fills with tears of pity, sparkles with the radiance of affection, and flashes with the fire of anger. By the eye we are able, therefore, to discern much of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The eye is also urgently needed to enable us to do the work of life. It is by the eye that we are lighted to our toils, discover the path in which we must tread, and look upon the faces of our friends or the beauty of God's creation. Each time we see a blind person or pass institutions devoted for the recovery of sight, let us lift up our hearts to thank God for *this* priceless boon.

It is interesting to notice the comparison which our Lord employs. He speaks of the eye as the "light of the body;" in other places the same Greek word is rendered "lamp," or "candle." In the fifth chapter of Matthew we discover the same expression: "Neither do men light a lamp and put it under the bushel." The same word is used in Luke 12: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning." It is the word by which John the Baptist is designated in John 5—"He was a burning and a shining light"—in contradistinc-

tion to the other term, applied to our Lord alone, "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." The ministry of John was the lamp that lighteth the steps of men until "the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in his wings." The eye, our Lord says, is the lamp of the house of the body. It is as though He thought of the eye as hanging in the vestibule of the palace of life, casting its rays outward to the busy thoroughfare, and inward to the recesses of the soul.

It is obvious that there must be something in our inner life which corresponds to the eye, for our Lord adverts to the eye as the emblem and symbol of something within. He is not speaking of the eye of the body only, but of its correlative, the eye of the soul. What is that inner eye? Some have supposed that it is the power of a concentrated affection, for truly love sheds a warm glow over all the furniture of the inner life, as well as upon the great world without. Others have affirmed that the intellect is the eye of the soul, by which we are able to behold the ordered process of the world and to consider the processes of thought within us. A truer conception of our Lord's meaning, however, will lead to the conclusion that the eye of the body corresponds to the inward intention and purpose of the soul.

If, for a moment, you will examine your inner life, descending to the profound depths that lie beneath the surface of your being, you will discover that there is one deep aim or purpose which is the real intention of your life. Deep down below the play of emotion and intellect, and of engagement in various interests, there is one strong stream or current running perpetually through the dark ravines of your nature. It may be that you are hardly aware of it; your nearest and dear

est friends do not realize it. You would be startled if it were stated in so many words, but it is none the less true that there is a unity in each human character which God perceives. In each of us He can read a unity of purpose and a unity of will. This is the intention of the soul and distinguishes each of us from every one beside.

The eye may, of course, be healthy or unhealthy. If healthy, a tiny curtain which hangs at the back of the organism is adjusted to receive the focused rays which come from the external objects. On this tiny curtain is formed an invested image of all things which are visible. If you look into the eye of another, and especially into the eye of a little babe, you will see the whole panorama of the world presented as in a cinematoscope. This curtain is perpetually being readjusted, so that the unblurred image of the outer world may be cast upon it. When we are travelling in a railway train it is probable that in a single hour the focus is altered thousands of times, for at every jolt and oscillation of the vehicle there must be a readjustment of the lens.

When the eye is in an unhealthy condition the image is doubled or blurred. There are two ways in which it may become evil. To use a common expression, there may be the obliquity, called a squint, such as disfigured the noble face of Edward Irving. Mrs. Oliphant tells us that, as a babe, he was laid in a wooden cradle, through a whole in which he was able to watch the light with one eye, whilst the other retained its usual straightforward direction. His eyes, therefore, were not parallel, and it was impossible to focus them upon a given object. The soul's intention may be diverted from a single purpose in a double direction. We may pray with the object of gaining an answer from God, and

at the same time of receiving credit from man. We may try to amass the treasures of this world, and at the same time to be rich toward God. We may endeavour to serve two masters—God and mammon. This is the counterpart in the spiritual life of a squint in the eye. Another source of ill-health with the eye is when the little vesicles which supply blood for the tiny curtain become overcharged, so that it is impossible for the delicate nerves to adjust the lens, and the vision becomes blurred and indistinct. Yet another source of the evil eye is when a film forms over the surface of the pupil, so that the light cannot enter.

In contradistinction to all these evils, how good it is to have a clear eye, with its distinct vision; and how much more good it is when the purpose and intention of the soul is so undivided that the whole of life is illumined by the glow of a clear and beautiful radiance! All through this chapter our Lord is arguing against this double vision. He says: "Do not profess to belong to the kingdom of heaven while your hearts are buried in the earth; do not have two masters; do not be divided by anxious care; seek first the kingdom of God." All through this chapter He is, in fact, bidding us to make our constant prayer the cry of the psalmist, "Unite my heart to fear thy name." Our Lord sets His whole force against any duplication of character so inimitably described by John Bunyan in "Mr. Facing-both-ways," who, with one eye on heaven and another on earth, sincerely professed one thing and sincerely did another, and, from the inveteracy of his unreality, was unable to see the contradition of his life. "He tried to cheat both God and the devil, and in reality he only cheated himself and his neighbours."

There are three kinds of men. First, those who have

no intention; second, those who have a double intention; third, those whose intention is pure and simple.

1. *Some have no intention.* They live day by day without purpose; the eye of the mind is fixed definitely and intently upon nothing. They take each day as it comes, getting from it anything it may bring, doing the duty it demands; but their existence is from hand to mouth, at haphazard, with no aim, no ambition, no godly purpose. They cannot say, with the apostle, that they are leaving the things which are behind, and pressing forward to the things which are before, or that one thing they are ever engaged in doing. It is quite true that in many cases there may be no great cause to be championed, no subjects to be explored, no object in making money, because already there is an ample competence. Some may read these words who are daughters in a wealthy home, or young men the heirs of a considerable fortune, or people in humble life who have no urgent need to look beyond the day or week with its ordinary routine; but even these should have a supreme purpose—to bring down the New Jerusalem out of heaven, to establish the Kingdom of God amongst men, to hasten the coming of the day of Christ, or to be themselves purer and holier. To *become* may always be the supreme purpose and intention of the soul; to be a little more like Christ; to know and love Him better; to be able to shed more of His sweetness and strength upon others. There is no life so contained within the high walls of circumstances, but it may reach up toward the profound light of the azure sky that arches above.

Do not be content to drift through life; do not be satisfied to be a piece of flotsam, swept to and fro by the ebb and flow of the stream; do not be a creature of

circumstance, because it is certain that if you are not living with a divine purpose for God and eternity you are certainly living for yourself, for your ease, for mere indolent enjoyment, or to get through the years with as little fret and friction as possible. This, at the heart of it, and in such a world as this so abject and needy, is undiluted selfishness. To have no purpose is to have the worst purpose; to have no ambition is to be living for self; to have no intention is to be drifting through the wide gate, in company with the many that go in thereat, to their own destruction.

2. *Some have a double intention.* They have heard the call of Christ and have received the seed of the Kingdom; but so soon as it reached their hearts two strong competitors endeavoured to share with it the nutriment of the soul. On the one hand, there were the cares of the world—these largely have place in the poor and struggling; on the other hand, was the deceitfulness of riches—these principally are found among the opulent and well-to-do. For a brief interval there was a struggle as to which of these should be master, but the strife soon ended in the victory of the sturdy thorn; those ruthless brigands seized for themselves all the sustenance that the soil of the heart could supply, and grew ranker and taller until the tiny grain withered and failed to bring forth fruit to perfection.

Will you not examine yourself? You think that you are whole-hearted, whereas you may be double-hearted; or, to use the apt simile of the prophet, baked on one side and not on the other; or, to use the simile of the great dreamer, looking one way and rowing another. You seem to be very earnest in Christian work, but are you quite sure that your apparent devotion does not arise from a masterfulness of disposition that likes to be

independent and rule? May it not be due to a fussy activity, which must be engaged in many directions that the soul may escape from itself; or to a natural pity and sympathy for men, which would incite you to a similar deed, even though you had never heard of Christ? Of course, you say to yourself that your motive is pure and single, and that you only desire to glorify God; but in His sight it may be that you are really actuated by the natural propensities of your nature, by your desire to be first, or by your appetite for notoriety or money. The heart is so deceitful that it becomes us to examine ourselves with all carefulness, lest at the end of life we shall find that, whilst we appeared to be doing God's work, we were really doing our own; and that, whilst our friends gave us credit for great religious devotion, we were really borne along by a vain, proud and unworthy purpose, which robbed our noblest service of all value in the sight of eternity. As the apostle says, the one supreme intention of every child of God should be to please Him. How few of us can say, with the apostle: "Whose I am and whom I serve!" "It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; he that judgeth me is the Lord."

3. Let us see to it that we have a *pure and simple intention.* Our aim should be to set our whole soul upon one thing only—to do the will of God, so that the whole of our religious life may be spent before the Father, who seeth in secret; that our alms, our prayers, our fastings, should be for His eye, and His alone; and that the whole of our life should emanate from hidden fountains where God's Spirit broods, like those fountains of the Nile concealed in the heart of the great mountains, the secret of which for so long defied the research of the explorer. The lamp of a holy life is the pure intention

of the soul which seeks to gain nothing for itself, which has no desire to please men or to receive their commendation, which does not shirk adversity or court the sunshine, but which sets before it as its all-sufficient goal that God may be well pleased and that at the close of life's brief pilgrimage it may be said of each of us, as it was said of Enoch, "He had this testimony, that he pleased God."

How blessed such a life is! The light of the soul's pure intention illuminates God, duty, human love, the glory of creation, and the significance of history, literature and art. I remember once in my life, at a most important crisis, when for weeks I was torn between two strong, conflicting claims, that at last I was compelled to put aside all engagements and to go alone into the midst of nature, where I carefully examined my heart to its very depths. I found that the cause of the difficulty to ascertain God's will arose because I allowed so many personal considerations to conflict with the inner voice; and when I definitely put these aside, and stilled and quieted my life so that I became conscious of being impelled by one purpose only —to know and to do God's will—then the lamp of a pure intention sheds its glow upon the path which I became assured was the chosen path for me. And since I dared from that moment to follow, all other things have been added. It was when Solomon asked that he might have a wise and understanding heart, that he might know God's purpose, that God gave him honour, wealth and length of days. Again and again these words of Christ ring out as amongst the deepest that He ever spoke: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

If the lamp of the pure intention of the soul is not

kept pure and clean, "how great is the darkness!" Our Lord alludes, of course, to the fact that when darkness settles upon the forest, the beasts steal forth, the glades resound to the roar of the lion, the cry of the jackal, the laugh of the hyena. Multitudes of beasts that have lain quiet in their lairs whilst the sun was shining, creep forth; and our Lord says that when a man's heart is set on doing God's will the lower and baser passions of his nature—like so many beasts of prey—remain in their hiding places; but as soon as the blur comes, and the soul ceases to live for the one intense purpose of pleasing God, then darkness steals upon the house of life, and all manner of evil and unclean things, that otherwise would be shamed into silence and secrecy, begin to reveal themselves. "How great is that darkness!" If any are conscious that there is a darkness upon life, upon truth, upon the Word of God; if they are perplexed and plagued by the intrusion of evil things which fill them with misgiving—let me urge them to ask God to "cleanse the thoughts of their hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, that they may perfectly love him and worthily magnify his holy name."

THE INEXHAUSTIBLE RICHES OF THE BIBLE

CHAPTER SIX

VI

INEXHAUSTIBLE RICHES OF THE BIBLE—PERENNIAL INTEREST OF THE EXPOSITORY METHOD

In answer to this plea for Scripture exposition, it might be answered that the times need to be preached to, and that men must be up to date in their choice of themes. But such criticism ignores the fact that:

Human life in its essential features does not vary from one age to another. Whether lived in the gray dawn of history or in the New York Broadway, the play of human passion, of love and hate, of jealousy and revenge, of hope or foreboding, is identical. The dress, speech, accessories may differ, but all this is superficial and transitory; the woman that wore the jewels of an Egyptian sarcophagus was actuated by the same motives as her sister in the height of Parisian fashion. It is for this reason that the drama of every age retains its fascination for all succeeding ones. Neither Aristophanes, nor Moliere, nor Shakespeare can grow old. Drama possesses this quality because it holds the mirror to the heart and unveils its most secret passages.

What is true of the drama is equally true of Scripture. Humanity retains with unerring precision whatever is true of itself, whatever por-

trays the inner working of heart and mind, which no man could confess to his fellows, but every man recognises when set out before him. With infinite relish, therefore, generation repeated to generation the story of Abraham and Isaac, of Esau and Jacob, of Joseph and his brethren, of Moses and Aaron, and of all the other good men and bad, who pass before us in the ever-shifting panorama. These stories have been passed on from from lip to lip under the shadow of the pyramids and on the sands of the desert, by the Bedouin, the Mesopotamian, the Syrian, and the Hebrew. The attrition of the ages has moulded, rounded and smoothed them as the ocean waters the pebbles or the brooks the swirling stones. The very ease with which they unfold, the elimination of all extraneous matter, the clear-cut sentences which reveal tracks of character as lightning at night reveals a landscape, all prove the charm, the spell, the attraction which these ancient records have wielded. To be unfamiliar with them is to be uneducated and miss the chief opportunity of becoming acquainted with the throbbing heart of humanity. The Bible is not only the Word of God, but the revelation of man. It is the university of the world. Therefore to unfold its story in successive discourses is to enchain the interest of one's audience and procure a profound assent. The bad man recognises the workings of his own evil nature; the weak man sees the reflection of his own broken resolution and foiled

purposes; the tempted perceives that other men have trodden the valley before him and encountered the straddling form of Apollyon; whilst the tempest-tossed learn that the storms that sweep their sky have spent themselves on others, and have been succeeded by blue skies and clear shining. "If there come in one unbelieving or unlearned, he is reproved of all, he is judged by all; the secrets of his heart are made manifest; and so he will fall down on his face, and worship God, declaring that God is in you and truth."

When Nathan desired to convict David of his sin he was too wise to approach the royal conscience by a direct attack. He would have found the gates closed, the portcullis down, and the drawbridge up. But he interested him in a narrative, perhaps drawn from real life, or at least quite likely to have happened. The scene of the story and its accompaniments were so dissimilar to those of the royal palace that the shy conscience of the criminal never suspected that it was being approached; and it was only when the royal judgments had been unhesitatingly expressed that the veil was suddenly dropped and the rapier was thrust to the dividing of soul and spirit, of its joints and marrow. Deal with a man directly, and he resents the attack; deal with him implicitly and indirectly, and before he is aware he stands before the judgment seat and is speechless before its award. There is no man so likely to speak to his times as the conscientious

expositor of Scripture. He is always up to date. In his congregation there is almost certainly a Peter with his impulse, a John with his fervour and imagination, a calculating Judas, a reflective and hesitating Thomas, a cool, practical Andrew. Pilate may be there, cruel, crafty, and calculating, which is the main and likeliest chance. Herodias is sitting next to Martha, and Mary of Magdala to Mary of Bethany. It is impossible to delineate the character, the salient feature, the beauty or blemish of any of these without compelling their modern counterparts to behold their faces in a mirror.

The gist of much of the New Testament is also intended to prove that the attitude of the soul towards God is practically and essentially the same in every age. Paul, for instance, argues that when Abram believed God he exercised the same faith as we do when we "believe on him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification." And the imputation of righteousness, which reckons the sinner of to-day, justified and accepted, is not otherwise than that which operated in the case of the patriarch, of whom it is said that "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." The expositor of Genesis will, therefore, find himself in the midst of New Testament truth. When expounding the Book of Judges and retelling the stories of Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah,

he will be describing the faith which dwelt in its most developed form in Jesus, the Author and Finisher of Faith, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame."

It is instructive to consider how much of the New Testament is expository of the Old. We may without exaggeration describe Matthew's Gospel as an exposition of the Royal Psalms and prophecies. Whilst Mark views our Lord as the Servant of God, and Luke in His human aspects, Matthew's soul is filled with His supreme claim as "Son of David." In his pages what Isaiah and Jeremiah, Zechariah and Daniel said about the King and His kingdom is carefully selected and set forth. He reads the secrets that psalmists set to harp-music, and shows their fulfilment in the Redeemer. As King He was to ride the ass's colt; as Foundation-stone He was to be rejected of the builders; but as Lord He was to sit on the right hand of God, and, though born of a human mother, His goings forth were of old, even from everlasting. Here is the key for unlocking closed doors. Here is the die from which all those precious well-born coins were minted. Here is He of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write.

But still more markedly the Epistle to the Hebrews is an exposition of the old Book of Leviticus. Those glowing paragraphs may have been originally given as expositions. It does not re-

quire a great effort of the imagination to picture Apollos, who has often been credited with the authorship of this epistle, delivering it just as a series of expositions in the synagogue at Ephesus. He was mighty in the Scriptures, we are told. What more likely than that he should take up one of the most profound of its books for systematic treatment? He would be inclined thereto by his early training at Alexandria, where Hebrewism was strong, but the outward observance of Levitical ritual was impossible. The germ of these discourses may have been suggested during his residence there, in the effort to reconcile the teaching of Jesus being the Lamb of God with the prescriptions of the ancient law. When he redelivered his expositions at Ephesus, teaching the things concerning Jesus "with all carefulness," Priscilla and Aquila were arrested and deeply interested in the young apostle, so fervent, so bold, so eloquent, and took him to lodge with them, and expounded the way of God more carefully. It may be, therefore, that in this epistle, which is characterized by so many of the qualities of the Alexandrian, bears the last touches of his devoted friends. Later critics have even credited Priscilla as the authoress. There may be truth in the older hypothesis which inscribed the name of Apollos on the title-page, and this more recent one. We may have a joint-production: the main argument elaborated by Apollos, while Priscilla contributed the annotations. The comment of Luke the his-

torian is, therefore, hardly to be wondered at. "When he was come, he helped them much which had believed through grace." Such preaching as this could hardly fail to be helpful.

The Book of Revelation may also be said to be an exposition of the Book of Daniel. The ministry of the watcher-angels, their conflicts with strong resistance in the heavenly graces, their interest in our strifes and tears and prayers, are dwelt upon at length, expanded and expounded until we see their forms in rainbows and suns, and hear their trumpets sounding from star to star, and detect their resonant voices as they call to each other in the exercise of their patrol through the worlds. This great Babylon is explained to mean not only the royal dwelling-place of Nebuchadnezzar, which he built by the might of his power and the glory of his majesty, but the spirit of human society which magnifies the creature more than the Creator, and sets itself to persecute the saints. The witness borne by the Hebrew youths amid the luxuries of the palace and by their erectness amid the prostrate crowds, is shown to have its analogies in every age, and especially in the two witnesses who lie unburied in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also the Lord was crucified. But the breath of God entered unto them and they stood on their feet. The wild beasts of Daniel's vision reappear in the Apocalypse as visions of great kingdoms which set them-

selves against the Lord and against His Christ. The closing chapter of Daniel seems to lie at the heart of all those glimpses of the Resurrection which fill the latter pages of the Apocalypse, and the angel of Daniel 12:7 cries to the angel of Revelation 10:6. Of the many expositions of Daniel we have followed, John's was the first.

It is necessary, therefore, that no teacher or preacher should quote texts at random from any part of Scripture without staying to consider the stage in the progressive development of truth out of which that fragment was spoken. The hurling of texts by one school of theologians at another is, to say the least, unseemly; and it may be highly misleading, because in the heat of argument there may be little or no regard to the precise value that should be attached to this or the other passage. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable, but the Divine element was constantly affected by its human medium, precisely as the expression of the nature of Jesus grew and gathered strength with the development of His soul and mind and body. There is a precise analogy between the advancing expression of truth from Genesis to Revelation, and of the utterance of the Divine Word from the babblings of childhood to the teaching of the forty days during which He tarried after His resurrection. Luke tells us that He began to do and teach until the day that He was taken up.

This progress is very remarkable when we

study the Bible as a whole. We open it at the words, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;" but how stately and entrancing is the steady sweep of the ascending stairway which lands us finally in the cry, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." To read through the Koran is to be oppressed by an unconnected, shapeless mass of statements, more or less incongruous; but to read the Bible is to become educated by an orderly scheme of advancing doctrines. Take its teaching as to immorality, for instance. What a leaven of difference there is between the pessimism of Ecclesiastes and the trumpet note of 1 Corinthians 15!

The New Testament bears a striking testimony to the same law. We begin with the Person of Christ and the story of His manifestation in the flesh. We witness His miracles, wonder at His wonderful words, behold the expanding fulness of His program, and see His ministry approaching its climax. Then suddenly a great change occurs; we pass from the Synoptic Gospels and come under the teaching of John, who draws aside the veil, and we behold His glory, the glory of the only-begotten Son of God. When we read the Synoptics we are walking with Christ along the road to Emmaus, with our hearts indeed burning, but our eyes holden; but in the Fourth Gospel our eyes are opened, and we know Him for what He is. Is not this a distinct development of His character and glory?

We close the Gospels and open the Acts of the Apostles, and again find ourselves in the midst of movement. We cannot see or touch the Lord, but He is as literally present as in the days of His flesh. He is there as a spiritual presence, providing for difficulties and perplexities, building up the temple of God, succouring, comforting, moulding, shaping, directing, leading His people to new triumphs, experiences and participations of the divine life. There is surely movement here. The natural and physical has made way for the spiritual and eternal. "That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; afterward that which is spiritual." "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven."

When we turn from the Acts of the Apostles to the Epistles, the movement is still more apparent. There were many things which our Lord desired to communicate during the days of His flesh, but His apostles could not bear them, though they were of the highest moment. But He promised the Spirit of Truth to guide them unto all the truth. That word was carefully chosen to indicate the successive steps by which they were to be led forward and shewn plainly the truth as it is in Jesus. The earlier teaching had anticipated the coming of a day in which many things would be unfolded to them for communication to the world, and that happy day had now arrived. At first they were taught as those who were *with*

Jesus, afterwards as being *in Christ.* They knew that He was in the Father, and they in Him, and He in them.

To quote the Bampton lecturer of 1864: "Thus the great course of divine teaching reached its highest stage. After slowly moving on through the simple thoughts of patriarchal piety, through the system and covenant of the Law, and through the higher spirituality of the prophets, it rose suddenly to a lofty elevation when God spoke to us in His Son, and even higher yet when the Son ascended back unto glory and sent down His Holy Spirit to take up His unfinished Word and open the mysteries which had been hid from ages and generations. Each stage of progress based itself on the facts and instructions of that which went before. The law was given to the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the prophets spake to those who were under the law; Jesus Christ came to those who had been taught by the prophets; the Holy Spirit instructed those who had received Christ."

In the Book of Revelation there is a still further advance. As we turn its pages we behold the war of the Lamb and His saints against all that opposes the reign of God amongst men, and the ultimate realization of a condition in which there is no sin nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, nor death. Here is the restoration not only of personal, but corporate life. The Temple of God will be built; the city will realize the corporate

existence of humanity, as members of each other; and the earth shall sing again in her motions as she did at her first creation.

Of course the Divine Unity of the Bible is apparent to the eyes of all thoughtful students. The slow process of evolving the truth from its earliest incipiency to its supreme manifestation is acknowledged by all schools of thought. But even when this is granted it is clear that the gradations by which the Divine Author of Revelation proceeds will be more simply and accurately drawn as pastor and people turn slowly page by page, and linger not over the text, but the context, and extracting instruction not merely from one cluster of the Vine, but from the entire vintage. It is difficult to conceive of any process, therefore, which will more magnify the Scriptures, more unfold their truth, more explain their method, more saturate our congregations with their essence and spirit, than the habit of continuous exposition. It has been the practice of most of the preachers of the past, who have left their indelible impression both in speech and print on the life of the church, and it is still the secret of that freshness and fertility, which remind one of the River, that at every thousand cubits becomes deeper, and in the presence of whose life-giving waters the salt marshes were healed.

THY BROTHER—EXPOSITION OF MATTHEW 5:23, 24

"THEREFORE, if thou bringest thy gifts to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." (Matt. 5:23, 24.)

You can easily understand how great an effect the message of our Lord must have produced upon the truly religious Jews, of whom probably there were many at this time in Palestine. We can imagine how they would gather round His message whenever He preached, and it is not difficult for us to realize how great an impression His pure and holy teaching must have had upon the Jewish church. We can easily imagine, also, how these very words, having been heard by a pious Jew, would influence him in some such way as this. On one occasion, in the afternoon, in the glory of the Eastern climate, he would enter the sanctuary of God, bearing a gift about to be placed in the hands of the priest waiting, white-vestured, beside the altar, as an offering to Jehovah. But suddenly, to the priest's astonishment, he would place his gift at the foot of the altar; then, turning his back upon the sacrifice so placed, would hasten away; returning after two hours, with the morning in his face, he would take the gift and place it in the hand of the priest, and so present it to God. If afterwards the priest accosted him, and asked how it was he delayed so long, the man might answer: "A little while ago, standing upon one of the hills of Galilee, listening to Jesus of Nazareth—a truly holy man is He—I heard Him say, 'When you are about to offer your

gift at the altar, if you remember your brother has aught against you, you must defer your worship until you have made it right with him.' And there suddenly flashed into my mind the memory of one man in Jerusalem whom I could not look in the face, because I have wronged him, and I hastened to find him and make it right with him. I have received his full and frank forgiveness, and feel the more able to realize the forgiveness of the Almighty, who puts away your sins as far as the east is from the west."

All that has gone; the altar is razed to the ground, the long line of Levitical priests has passed away for ever, and the whole Levitical system is no longer in vogue or imperative. But the eternal truth that underlies these great words of Christ is for every age and for every race. In these days there is nothing that needs to be brought home to the conscience and mind with more force than this, that man can never get right with the Eternal until he is right with his fellow, and it is absolutely impossible to enjoy the sunlight and forgiveness of the Almighty as long as there is a grievance which has not been made up between ourselves and any man, woman, or child under God's sky.

1. **Remember.** Each thoughtful person admits that the record of our life in its minutest incident is being recorded upon two books, each of which is sure to keep it secret. On the one hand we are recording upon the yielding ether every act we do, every word we speak, every scene in which we take part. If I raise my hand I produce a movement which has already passed beyond this church roof and is making its way into the infinite profound. If we could take the wings of the morning or, borne onward by a strong angel, pursue the retreating impressions of our life in some distant realm, we should

descry there, imprinted upon the walls of Eternity, which for evermore will retain its impression, our cradle, our mother's form, ourselves, our school days; and as we travelled nearer and nearer to this moment we should behold again all those scenes, for ever recorded, some of which we would fain obliterate and forget, but, though they may be forgiven, they can never, never be undone. O God! who seest these impressions, is there no power with Thee anywhere that shall blot out what has been wrought? Art Thou also impotent as Thou standest face to face with the past of Thy children?

Everything is also recorded upon the convolutions of our brain. As when you add books to your library you have to increase the shelves to hold them, so doubtless the brain is constantly increasing in size, from the boy to the man, and from young manhood onward. The increasing convolutions of the brain receive the impressions of everything we say and do and hear and take part in.

There is a great difference, we acknowledge, between memory and recollection. Memory holds everything, though recollection cannot always find anything. Memory is like a great box into which a man puts all his letters, receipts, bills, manuscripts, scraps and paragraphs he cuts out of the newspapers; but the hand may dive into the box and turn over the mass of letters, and fail to discover any given paper for which it is making search. Memory holds everything; recollection cannot always remind us of everything just when we choose. But yet, when we go forth and wander through streets or woods, there may be the scent from wild flowers, the call from the birds, or the odour from the grass, for the sense of smell is the quickest to recover from the shrine of memory, which will remind us of something which

we have failed to discover. Memory contains everything.

There are moments when the imperishableness of memory's rewards becomes apparent to most men.

1. One of these is the moment of drowning. Those who have been recovered from the water will tell you how, when they sank for the third time, and it seemed as if all hope must be abandoned, the history of their past life stood out before them in its minutest detail, as the landscape stands out in the night under the flash of the lightning.

2. Mental disease. It is recorded as a simple, illiterate girl that, under the touch of some mental disease, she was able to speak in an unknown tongue. A learned man who heard her recognised it as one of the languages in which the Old Testament was written, and it was discovered that in early life she had been in the service of a clergyman who was accustomed to read the Hebrew version aloud. Without doubt she had heard and retained those impressions involuntarily.

3. Under the touch of any great emotion—such as fear, hope, love, ecstasy—any sudden stroke of emotion will make memory yield up its contents. Therefore, Jesus said, in your highest moments, when you come to the altar, when you stand in the Presence of the Infinite and Eternal, when you take the shoes from your feet, remembering the place on which you stand is holy ground, then you will remember. In the silence, in the loneliness, the awestricken wonder of the spirit, when the curtains are being drawn, and God is looking down upon your heart, then we remember. That is its lustre, that is its uplifting strain of solemn music. When we stand in the death chamber and our beloved is passing from us, then we remember. Probably the place where we remember most clearly the way in which our brother

has been grieved at us is at that solemn hour when earth meets earth and dust touches dust, and the form we loved, or thought we loved, or professed to love, is forever taken from our sight. Then we remember.

For us the altar is specially the Cross. And I want to ask myself and each of my hearers why it is, when we come near to the Cross of Christ (for "we have an altar whereof they have no right to eat who serve this tabernacle"), why there we remember? Is it not because the cross reveals, as nothing else on this earth reveals, the eternal life of God? Will you forgive me if I say—I know the metaphor is not the most complete—that in some aspects the cross seems to be God's tuning-fork set to the music of eternity, suddenly placed amid the discords of earth, and it is only when we hear that pure note that we know how dissonant our lives are.

In yonder village a boy grew up, adored by all the villagers, who thought his voice would surpass that of the world's greatest singers, though probably they had never heard one of them. A musician, anxious to recruit his choir, journeys to the village and finds the boy the center of an admiring group. Certainly, the boy has a strong, sweet voice; but there are many defects in it, and the quick ear of the musician detects them. He asks the boy if he will come to be trained. The parents consent, and the boy enters the musician's house, where probably he will spend some months. On the first night after his arrival the choir boys who have been trained for three or five years are there to sing, and the country lad is placed within full view of the musician's eye. At first his face bears the look of rapt expectancy; he had never heard anything like that; then it flushes, the tears flow down his cheeks, and the boy sobs until the professor, who desires to befriend him, exclaims: "Why

is this? Is it for mother or home you cry?" "No," says the boy, "I never heard singing like that. I thought I could sing; they all told me that I could sing; but if that is singing, I can never sing. Let me go home; it is useless for me to stay." It is only when he has heard the infinite beauty of perfect singing that he knows his own limitations; and it is only when you and I stand in the light and glory of Calvary that we know what love can do—for "Herein God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And to me the most wonderful thing in the love of God is that it leaves no stone unturned to win back those who are stolid and sullen. I can understand God forgiving the penitent. Human love will easily forgive those who sue for pardon; but our difficulty is to win back those whom we have grieved and offended, and driven by our hardness to enclose themselves in the ice of strong resistance. That is the difficulty, and that is where God's love surpasses ours. He is not simply good to those who are good, but to the unthankful and evil, who shut themselves up in their cells.

At the Cross, also, we remember that we have not done all we might to win others. It is the failure of our lives that hurts them most. It is not that we have been cruel or violent towards those who were dear, as men may be under the influence of drink, but that we have failed them. We have been shut up in our own self-consciousness; we have not responded, not carried a beaming face, not uplifted in our home-life. Multitudes have grievances against us because we have not been all we might have been in strong, chivalrous love. It is this that we remember.

We should not be surprised, after a vision of the Cross, or after kneeling at the Lord's table, to find some

Christian matron get up between the bread and wine and leave the church. And when the pastor calls to inquire the reason, fearing she might be ill, she replies: "Ah, no; but I had a little motherless sewing-maid in my house! I am sure I did not understand the child, and was always chiding her; she thought me unkind and left me. She drifted away. I felt I had not done all I could for that motherless girl. I went to seek her, I brought her back to my home and to church, and she is again sheltered under my care."

I recall a story I heard recently of one converted by the grace of God after a wild life. They urged him to join the church and take the Lord's Supper. "No, never," he said; "at least not yet." He left his home and sought through the slums of three great cities for the girl once pure and undefiled, upon whom he had laid his tainting touch, and who had drifted to the furthest lengths. He found her in a top attic, burning with a consumptive fever, on a straw pallet, with no one but the woman of the house to look in on her now and again and moisten her lips. He hastened away and procured what was necessary for her wants. Then, as a pure brother to a pure sister, he nursed her for three weeks until she died. But in that time he had won her back to Christ, and she blessed and forgave him with her dying breath. Then he came and took the Lord's Supper. He had put it right with her and had been forgiven, and her forgiveness opened the door for the flood-tide of Christ's. Some of you will never get right with God till you have found the man, woman, or child who, if death intervened, would go to complain to God about you, not only because of what you did, but because of what you did not do. "I was hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink;

I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it *not* to one of the least of these men, women, and children, whom I put within your reach, ye did it not to me."

"Remember." Through this church to-day may there pass a great quickening of memory, so that between this morning and to-night or early to-morrow morning you will all put things right that are wrong; and not in this church only, for the time is coming when judgment must begin in the house of God, and He is demanding that His Church should arise and shine, because she cannot minister to the great needs of vast populations until every man and woman is utilizing their opportunities for the best interests of others; not till then will the revival for which we are longing visit us.

2. **Be Reconciled.** We are not dealing with your forgiveness of people who kneel at your feet and ask your pardon; we are dealing with the cases of people from whom you have to extract pardon, which is a very different thing. I think it is in the Book of Proverbs that the Wisdom of the past says, "An offended brother is harder to win than a defensed city with bars."

Do you remember that poem, the dream of St. Gerontius, which gives us that great hymn which was Mr. Gladstone's favorite, "Praise to the Holiest in the Height?" Do you remember the time when the soul of St. Gerontius, having left its earthly body, is passing upward in immortal vesture, attended by an angel? There are some wonderful lines where the angel tries to ex-

plain to the soul how he had disentangled it from the earthly coil. I am perfectly sure there are many people around whom a sort of coil is twisted which has been manufactured out of our fancied or literal ill-treatment of them. They have magnified, distorted, exaggerated; they have shut themselves up against Christianity. "I have had one taste of it," they say, "and am sick of it. Never again." And they have proceeded to justify their position by saying, "There is no Christ, no religion, no God." Many a soul has drifted into atheism, or at least agnosticism, in consequence. You have to disentwine all that. First there must be the honest purpose; then there must be confession and absolute reparation. Hildebrand kept the emperor waiting at his gate for three days and nights, clad in the thinnest vesture in the icy wind, before he deigned to pardon him, and the outraged soul will often keep us waiting. Only the love of God can sustain us in our quest.

One of the most successful missions of my life originated thus. On the first night of the mission my word was used of God until the soul of a certain man responded, like King Richard, from this prison cell to his minstrel, Blondin. This man had been entrusted with a very wealthy ward, to whom he gave five per cent on her capital, which had been invested at seven and a half per cent. He had considered himself perfectly justified in appropriating the extra two and a half per cent, and had done this for many years. That hour he awoke to see that he had been unfaithful to his trust. He went home, knelt before God, and vowed that he would right the wrong. He wrote out a check for the whole amount he had purloined through the past, and with interest added; posted the note that night, so that he might not withdraw from his purpose, and in the

morning, when he awoke, the light of the Eternal was shining in his heart and face. That man's conversion brought about a revival which is lingering to-day in its wonderful effect.

Surely the brother who has the greatest grievance, though he never reproaches us, is Christ Himself. He does not complain; He does not break the silence; He carries our offense deep buried in His heart. It is difficult to understand how heaven can be a perfectly happy place. To some of us, at least, the first entrance to it will be one of almost infinite heart-breaking regret, and we shall want to stand in the rear of the mighty multitude, so as to avoid the sight of His face, marred by the addition of our ingratitude. Have you not grieved Him? And will you not go to your great Brother, as the brothers went to Joseph, after Jacob's death (thirty years after the time when they sold him into Egypt), and said, "Wilt thou forgive us for the way we treated thee?" He wept because they remembered it; and in the magnificent language of ancient Scripture we are told, "He nourished them, and spake to their heart." Will you not also see that the failures and sins you have committed are forgiven by God and man? Then Jesus Christ shall nourish you also and speak to your hearts.

3. **Return.** "Come again." "Then come." Is it not tender? This Sermon on the Mount is full of the gospel. "Then come." "But, Lord, I called my brother 'fool!' May my lips speak to thee." "Then come." "I called him 'Raca,' 'Atheist.' May I come?" "Then come." But, Lord, the passion is hot upon me!" "Don't delay, but come. Then come." It seems as if all heaven is ringing with that message. Don't stay out in the cold. Don't count yourself to have sinned be-

yond hope. Don't give up! Think of those intimate relations with God you once cherished. Come, backslider! Cold-hearted Christian, come. Let the forgiveness of men be the sacrament of the forgiveness of God. Again it says, "Come." Come and thake that gift which thirty years ago you placed on the altar—that gift which then you meant to make so profusely to Him —the gift of yourself. Forget the long years that have passed, and which gape like a gulf between that moment and this. Take up your life where you dropped it before you went astray, before you dropped the thread of obedience, became immersed in business and adopted schemes not of God. Come back to where you were in those happy, holy days, when you lived in the presence of God. You were a better man then, a nobler woman than you have been of late. This you know perfectly well. You know you have gone back; you have become materialistic, hard-fisted, worldly. Then come back. Take up the high purpose of your life where you dropped it, and then coöperate with your Redeemer by going out to redeem the world by love.

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